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Arthur Koestler

Attila, the Poet

THOUGH in his native Hungary Attila Jozsef is posthumously regarded as the greatest poet the nation has produced, his name is still virtually unknown in the West. He committed suicide at the age of thirty-two; both his work and his personal fate were a terrifying symbol of our time. He was a contemporary Villon, whose life and poetry revolved around the two treacherous poles of this age, Marx and Freud, and who died a victim of both.

He was born in 1905, the son of a day-labourer and of a cleaning woman. His father disappeared when he was three, and to his seventh year Attila was brought up in an orphanage. He earned his living through school as a movie-usher, news-boy, and night-waiter, and through college as a railway porter, Danube sailor, dock-worker, office cleaner, and private tutor. His first poems were published in the leading Hungarian literary magazine, *Nyugat* ("Occident"), when he was sixteen. One year later, in 1922, *Nyugat* printed his poem, "Innocent Song," which caused a nationwide scandal and his expulsion from the University of Szeged. "Innocent Song" was acclaimed as a kind of manifesto of the Central European post-war generation. (The translations in this essay, which were made with the kind and expert help of Laurie Lee, are merely meant to indicate the trend of Attila's poetry.)

I have no God, I have no King,
My mother never wore a ring,
I have no crib or funeral cover,
I give no kiss, I take no lover.

For three days I have chewed my thumb
For want of either crust or crumb.
I am twenty, strong and hale—
My twenty years are up for sale.

Should there be none who wish to buy
The Devil's free to have a try;
Then shall I use my common sense
And rob and kill in innocence.

Till, on a rope, they hang me high,
and in the blessed earth I lie—
And lush and poisoned grasses start
Rank from my immaculate heart.

His first volume of poems was published in the same year, his second volume in 1925, when he was twenty. In that year, the Mæcenas of Hungarian letters, Baron Louis Hatvany, sent him on a summer vacation to France, and in later years, too, helped him with small sums. Nevertheless, the whole of Attila's short life was haunted by poverty; he never achieved "the monthly two hundred" which became one of his various obsessions. The "two hundred" refers to Hungarian Pengoe, and the total of the unattainable dream was the equivalent of fifteen pounds per month.

WHEN I met Attila in 1933, we were both twenty-seven. He was of pure-bred Magyar, rural stock: of medium height, lean, sparse, sinewy, he carried his body like a regimental sergeant-major. He had a narrow face with a high forehead, calm brown eyes, and calm, regular features to which a certain dash

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and enterprise were added by a trim moustache with pointed ends. It was a handsome and manly, but quite unremarkable face that could have been a ladies' hairdresser's; nothing in its unruffled appearance suggested that its owner had spent several months in a mental hospital, suffering from delusions, and was heading for the final break-up.

At the time of our friendship he was, in fact, quite normal except for certain eccentricities and intellectual obsessions. Dominant among these were psychoanalysis and Hegel-Marxian dialectics. Attila had joined the Hungarian underground Communist movement in the late twenties, and had been expelled for Trotskyist leanings in 1930 or 1931. But he had remained a true proletarian and a true revolutionary if ever there was one, who hated the "Bonapartism" of Stalin with a Jacobin passion. Intellectually, he was an accomplished acrobat of the Dialectic, and capable of arguing until three or four o'clock in the morning about some obscure decree of the Paris Commune of 1871, or the Budapest Commune of 1919, analysing its implications with a manic rush of words, and with a chess-player's logical precision (he actually was a passionate chess-player too). In the early hours of the morning he would go home and, unburdened of these cerebral obsessions, write one of the poems which have since become classics of Hungarian literature. He would read it to Németh* and me the next day, over coffee after lunch, and then at once launch again into a dialectical excursion. He fled from poetry into cerebration, from cerebration into poetry. In his *œuvre*, he achieved a magic synthesis of the two. In his life, the split never healed, either in the metaphorical or in the clinical sense: the disease of his mind was schizophrenia.

We never quarrelled about politics for, though I was still a member of the Communist Party, I too was a born Trotskyist by temperament, and Attila did not challenge me on the point where my faith was most vulnerable, meaning Russia. Attila was not interested in Russia. He was interested in the misery of his own country, which he knew to the bottom of its depth:

. . . On the rim of the city where I live/when darkness begins to fall/sootflakes sail the air, like soft-winged tiny bats/and settle everywhere/ hardening, thickening, like birds' excrement./Thus weighs this age on our chests.

His songs of the slums show no trace of the dreary naturalism and "socialist realism" that were the vogue of the pink thirties; they are pure and fresh and lyrical, even at their most terrifying:

Oppression, like a swarm of vultures/makes carrion of our hearts/and misery oozes down the globe/like spittle over the moron's face.

THE unique quality of the poems of his later years lies in their miraculous union of intellect and melody. In this respect I can think of no contemporary poet to whom he could be compared. His most complex and cerebral Marxist and Freudian poems read like folksongs, and sometimes like nursery rhymes; "ideology" is here completely distilled to music which, whether *adagio* or *furioso*, is always eminently *cantabile*. His rhythm almost automatically translates itself into song; his rhymes are virgin matings of rolling four- and five-syllable words (Hungarian is an inflecting language with long words, rich in dark vowels, full of rustic sap and juice, and highly onomatopœic; all of which turns translating into a nightmare of frustration). One of his last poems, written while under psychoanalytic treatment shortly before insanity set in, is an example of that new branch of poetry that he created—the Freudian folksong. It is called "The Sin":

It seems I am a sinner grim,
But, thank you, I feel fine.
It worries me though, why that sin
Eludes me when it's mine.

I am a sinner without doubt
But though I rack my brain,
That crafty sin turns round about
And leaves me without stain.

* Hungarian author and critic, and a close friend of Attila's.

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As treasure-divers in a lake
I seek that guilt profound;
I left my mother for its sake
And yet my heart is sound.

One day I'll find it, stowed away
In some prim governess—
But now friends, let's to the café
I'm itching to confess.

I tell you: once I killed a man,
My father—so I think.
Before my eyes his red blood ran
In a night of curdled ink.

I stuck him with a knife, God's truth;
We're human, after all,
And shall in turn feel murder's tooth,
And stabbed, as he was, fall.

So I confess . . . and lingering, wait
To watch the antic crowd;
To mark those frightened by my fate
And those who laugh aloud.

Then, just before I turn to stone,
I catch one kindling eye
Which signals: you are not alone
For all must sin who die . . .

Perhaps my sin is an infant stain
And really nothing worse;
And the world will shrink again
And I'll ride my rocking horse.

God leaves me cold; so does the devil;
It was not these who made me.
One day I shall my sins unravel
And all mankind shall aid me.

At the time of our friendship, Attila was an extremely amiable and amusing, though somewhat exhausting companion. He had his moments of exuberance and would write drinking songs—"O wine, milk of virile men . . ."—though he drank rarely. He also wrote a congratulatory poem to his own birthday—the thirty-second and last:

Thirty-two and very wise—
This poem shall be a surprise
And so pret-
ty—pretty.
A gift that shall the spirits rouse
Of the lonely guest in this coffee-house:
My-
self.

Thirty-two, what an event,
And never enough to pay the rent,
And always hungry
In Hung'ry . . .

He had moments of a classical and festive mood: his poem of welcome to Thomas Mann on the occasion of Mann's visit to Budapest, had the beautiful closing lines:

We shall listen to you and some
Will just gaze at you in joy, for it delights
Us to see you here: a European among the
Whites.

Attila usually got up at midday, and joined Németh and myself for coffee after lunch; and unless we told him that we had to work, he would stay on and talk through the whole afternoon. But even during that period of sanity there were occasional frightening flashes on the horizon. One day, twiddling his pointed moustache, he startled us by pronouncing in a casual, conversational voice a phrase of fantastic obscenity, and the more startling as normally he displayed a kind of proletarian puritanism.

On another occasion I found Attila lying on the couch in Németh's room, in a state of obvious depression. I asked whether anything was the matter, and he said yes. I asked what it was and Attila, suddenly sitting up, said, grinning: "Let's see whether you can find out through *Bar Kokhba*." "Bar Kokhba" was a question-and-answer game much in vogue at that time in Budapest, a variant of "animal, vegetable or mineral."* The dialogue which ensued was roughly on these lines:

I: Is it something that happened today?
A.: Yes.
I: Is it money?
A.: No.

*The name of the game is derived from a legendary event: Bar Kokhba, leader of the Galilean insurrection against Rome, sent a spy to the enemy camp. The Romans caught the spy and cut out his tongue, then let him go. He nevertheless managed to convey what he had seen to his leader, by answering Bar Kokhba's questions with blinks of the eye signifying yes or no.

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I: A woman?
A.: Yes.
I: Irene?
A.: No.
I: Judith?
A.: Yes.
I: Is it tragedy or comedy?
A.: Tragedy.
I: Has she run away?
A.: No.
I: Has she killed herself?
A.: N-no.
I: Tried to kill herself?
A.: Yes. . . .

Thus did I learn that Judith, Attila's wife, had tried to poison herself, and had been taken in a critical state to the public ward of a hospital. Attila was not allowed into the ward, and was waiting for news over the telephone. He loved Judith and was suffering agonies on her behalf; but that did not prevent him from playing that game. In the end Judith was saved. That scene was partly a symptom of his state of mind, and partly an expression of the macabre *Galgenhumor* which saturated the atmosphere of the whole town.

Attila had repeatedly tried to kill himself, the first time at the age of nine when he swallowed a bar of starch in the belief that it was poison. At fourteen or fifteen, he lay down on the railway track to have himself run over by a goods train which passed every day at a given hour through the village. Time went on, but the train did not come. In the end Attila got up and started walking along the rails to meet it. He then discovered the reason why the train was late: it had killed another person a mile farther up the line. "Somebody else has died for me," he used to say afterwards.

Trains, in particular goods trains, became henceforth another of Attila's obsessions. They keep roaring through his poems, as the ocean "sick of prey, yet howling on for more" does through Shelley's; until finally they got their prey. In 1937, he spent a few weeks in a mental home. Then, as his condition seemed to have improved, he was handed over to the care of his sisters who were living in a small village on Lake Balaton. One evening in November, he wandered down to the railway station where a goods train was standing, bound for Budapest. As he was approaching the station, the train began slowly to move. He now broke into a run, squeezed through under the lowered barrier, knelt down at the track and, as the train was gathering speed, laid his right arm in between two carriages on the rail. The arm was later found, cleanly severed and thrown at some distance from the mangled body.

A few days after Attila's death, his family found in his drawer a shirt from which he had cut off the right sleeve with scissors. Apparently his complex of guilt had inspired him with the idea that he must have his right arm cut off; and when that was done, the train, howling for more, had drawn the rest of the body under the wheels. His death was, fittingly, announced to his sisters by the giggling and spluttering village idiot.

The Hungarian Communist Party, which had excommunicated Attila Jozsef in his lifetime, canonised him after his death. Had he been still alive when Hungary came under Russian rule, he would have shared the fate of all my other friends; so it is just as well that he chose the goods train. If he could come back for an hour, he would twirl his trim moustache and launch into a dissertation on the proper dialectical timing of one's death.

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D. J. Enright

Notes from a Japanese University

Kobe

IT'S difficult to deduce much about the average Japanese student from the university, rather small and very new and catering chiefly for the well-to-do of the Kobe-Osaka region, to which I'm attached. Industrious, yes —one expects that from the Japanese student. Well-behaved (for if some of the girls giggle incessantly this is a mark of immense respect, not of an undone button)—one expects that, too, from the well-to-do. As for intellectual debate—it is still considered improper to contradict; and if I told my class that *Paradise Lost* was written by Shakespeare, they would nod gravely and think otherwise. I'm not evangelising very strenuously on this point, however: once the face-saving convention is abolished (as, necessarily, in the Diet) a rough-house is apt to ensue.

But, oh dear, the staff are shockingly underpaid—though, by Japanese standards, this university is a generous one. A senior academic of a well-known Tokyo college remarked to me quite casually that he had done eight hours of teaching that day (in England a young assistant lecturer's quota for the week). Not all, of course, in his own university—he had to make up his income by teaching elsewhere and by turning out popular journalism. Some of the high schools give their staff a day off in the week, described as "research day"—a teacher explained it to me: "That means a holiday."

Not that one wants to see them all following the English example and grinding away at the hypothetical influence of one literary nonentity on another literary nonentity. But what is going to happen to the standard of teaching? I heard of an old professor whose weary mind let him down in the middle of a lecture—a pupil who happened to have his father's lecture notes with him was happily able to tell the old man what to say next.

THE traditional respect for the professor, the *sensei*. "In this country," a lively and successful business man tells me, "we have immense respect for the *sensei*." I must look a little sceptical, for he adds suspiciously, "You are much too business-like for our idea of a *sensei*."

It was he who, as a governor of the university, offered us a house on a mountain, a difficult half an hour's walk from public transport. I hinted that we had come to Japan to see Japan and not the top of a mountain. He was surprised: "But you're supposed to be a poet, aren't you?" Now we live in a popular district, with little wooden boxes springing up all round us, and crying babies and starving animals, and the sky has almost disappeared. Sometimes we wonder if we shouldn't have settled for the mountain hermitage.

Respect for the *sensei*. More money and less respect—as in Europe—might be preferable.

A VERY interesting discussion, over eels and rice and *saké*, with a group of younger writers and teachers of the neighbourhood. A burning enthusiasm for literature, quite unself-centred, which I don't remember having seen much of in England. Above all, a hunger for foreign literature, after the starvation of the

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war years, which is moving, and more than a little disturbing. A hungry man doesn't always know what he is gulping down.

The gods that the younger writers are whoring after are not altogether strange: Eliot, Graham Greene, Sartre, Camus (whom they read as a fainter carbon copy of Sartre), Rilke, and Kafka. Our conversation is absolutely honest, I believe. A little *saké*, and we tacitly agree to shelve the question of "face." An older, more sceptical man confesses: "*The Waste Land* means too much to us—and *Four Quartets* practically nothing at all."

Too much, yes, and too little. *The Waste Land* means not the bringing of life into poetry and poetry into life but quite simply a wholesale denigration of life, a throwing in of the human towel. They are telling me about the yearly anthology of "modern" (i.e. western-style) Japanese poetry: "*Westrandu*" it seems to be called. Suddenly the penny drops: the anthology is entitled "Wasteland."

A tragic situation. Eliot was traditionalist as well as innovator: he could draw on the English 17th century. But what can the modern Japanese poet find in his national poetic past to serve as such a spring-board? Nothing, it appears. The unique violence of recent Japanese history: in eighty or so years the country has (after its fashion) covered ground over which the West took a leisurely four hundred years. And so life outstripped poetry, to a degree unparalleled in the West. Obviously poets can't confine themselves to the traditional themes—moon, pine-trees, Fuji, plum blossom, and autumn leaves. Subject-matter has to change, and so must form. But form is very tenacious—even though the traditional forms, *tanka* and *haiku*, long ago declined into a genteel pastime ("respect for poetry"?). A person of taste can easily write forty or fifty over the weekend—it's a good deal less arduous than crossword puzzles or sonnets. I once asked my colleagues, "How can you tell a good *haiku* from a bad one?" "We cannot," replied one of them, "we don't know what standards to apply. But perhaps you, from Cambridge. . . ." He smiled politely. Another suggested with a slight cough, "All *haiku* are good, perhaps?"

And so the Japanese poet who takes his job seriously will look abroad for his models. Inevitable, but dangerous. The young English poet under Eliot's influence has presumably been aware of the diversified background of English poetry—aware of the original *To his Coy Mistress*, as well as Eliot's ironical reference to it. The German influenced by Rilke can hardly avoid the greater figure of Goethe. French civilisation has not collapsed into dust on account of *Les Chemins de la Liberté*.

But, alas, the Japanese poet, so open to current literary fashions, and so literal-minded it seems, rarely receives their "backgrounds." He sees these foreign prophets only against the petrified background of Japanese *après-guerre* (the expression, in the abbreviated form *apuré*, has entered the language; its most popular usage being the derogatory *apuré gāru*, or "post-war girl"). There is no past, there is no future. *The Waste Land*, having been universally recognised as a great poem, is therefore final proof that the world is waste: confirmation has conveniently been provided by Graham Greene, Sartre, Rilke, Kafka, Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, Jean Genêt, and Henry Miller. (It's a large bed: plenty of room for religious axe-grinders and cheap pornographers as well.) And so the young Japanese poet, zealous to bring life into his poetry, tends only to recapitulate, in the distorted accents of his masters, the death of God and Man.

What can I say? "Well . . . er . . . in my country we're not all rushing into monasteries because Graham Greene makes his living by manipulation of manure. . . . Don't you sometimes feel cynical about cynicism? I'm sure many of my contemporaries suspect that it's just another variety of sentimentalism. Literary disgust is the modern best-seller. . . ." I am thinking of some of my adult students in England, good solid Black Country labourites and nonconformists, licking enthusiastically at *Brighton Rock*.

The *saké* is cooling: we order some more.

God knows these young writers have genuine sorrows of their own (you can live on rice—yes, but who said rice was cheap?): but it's their own sorrows they have to deal with, and not the literary sorrows of our European

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writers. As it is, the obscure but sinister Angel stalks through their elegies, tripping from time to time over a prickly pear: instead of "Made in Japan," one reads plainly "Manufactured under licence from Duino and Russell Square."

A young poet-teacher, sensitive and intelligent, is much concerned over the imagery of the *Tenth Duino Elegy*—

siehe, sie zeigten vielleicht auf die Kätzchen
der leeren Hasel, die hängenden . . .

The catkins perplex him. What does the poet mean by them? Simply to give a little physical reality to an otherwise abstract landscape, I suggest, afraid that he is hunting some black philosophical profundity. He doesn't look convinced. One finds them everywhere in Europe, I assure him, a common sight, hanging from the trees. "A common sight," he repeats gloomily, nodding his head, "it seems rather strange to us Japanese." Some fifteen minutes later I realise that he has translated catkins as "little cats." I hasten to explain, lest he should think that in Europe we give our Waste Land a fiendish twist by hanging little cats from the branches of the dead trees.

In such ways a myth grows.

And thus the grim ideas flood over from the western world, while whatever we can boast of in the way of lively style is lost in transit. Lack of real intimacy with the original language, the spate of doubtful translations turned out by overworked journalists. A dreadful pity that such traps should lie in wait for these people, surely the keenest and most responsive readers in the world today.

What can be done? More exchange of persons between Britain and Japan, instead of merely books. But the government here has just announced a sharp cut in the funds available for such imports. (After all, it takes a lot of money to re-arm a country which has eternally renounced war only a few years before.) As for the British Council—a small staff, of the size which not so long ago would have been uselessly trying to sell British culture to a minor Egyptian town largely populated by illiterates, is here desperately struggling to meet the enormous demand of a whole country, increasing on all fronts from day to day.

But this is not the whole picture. One cannot fail to be impressed by the amount of good work done by Japanese teachers of English. For instance, at Tsuda College, the women's university on the outskirts of Tokyo, where a good part of the teaching is conducted in English. And Tokyo University ("Imperial" it is called no longer, though the famous hotel retains the old title, as does the Emperor), the University of Education, and Keio and Waseda. Here the standard of English teaching compares very favourably, I suspect, with the teaching of French or German in British universities. If there is a certain amount of bad English teaching in Japanese universities, then it is because there are too many universities.

And then there is the tradition of good solid work on English literature and language by Japanese scholars. To mention only a few of those I happen to have met—Sanki Ichikawa and Fumio Nakajima, the linguists; and the literary critics, Rintaro Fukuhara and Junzaburo Nishiwaki (the latter a Japanese poet esteemed for his originality). And the life-work on Blake of my colleague, Bunsho Jugaku, whose bibliographical study of the Note-book, written in English, has just been published in Tokyo—a contribution of international importance.

Tokyo

The wonder is that any work at all, good or bad, should be done under these circumstances and in this wretched environment! I used to think that scholastic buildings in Egypt had reached the nadir of disrepair and squalor. But these—ungainly barracks, discoloured walls, and rusting iron. The heating apparatus was removed during the war and has not yet been replaced: there seems to be a lingering feeling that "spartan" conditions are morally and intellectually elevating. The students don't appear to think so, judging from their miserable expressions as they huddle in their overcoats. Nor do the shivering lecturers. (Even in the milder south I have lectured in overcoat and gloves, against the drumming of the loose window panes.) It must be another of those

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business men's ideas, like "respect for the *sensei*."

Visited the University of Education (where William Empson and John Morris used to teach), surrounded by a sea of liquid mud now that the sixteen inches of snow are melting. Tokyo University—the famous Lafcadio Hearn library, old and recent memories of Edmund Blunden, recent memories of G. S. Fraser. Keio University—the most famous of the "private" universities, whose founder grew up in the 1880's, when foreign books were so rare that he would stay up night after night to copy out some craftily borrowed Dutch treatise on gunnery, illustrations as well. The highest intellectual standards of the country are maintained in these institutions; from the state of their buildings you would think that the war had ended yesterday, or had not yet ended. Japan, which could be the Athens of the East, is condemned to be the "Sparta."

MET Francis Haar, photographer and film producer, who showed me a documentary which he has just made, *Today's Students, Japan's Tomorrow*. The parts are played by students of Kyoto and Doshisha Universities: "born actors," as we say—that is, they didn't have to *act*.

Matsumoto is the younger son of a country family. Their patch of land is not large enough to support him, and he persuades his father to let him go to the university. Scholarships, in the English sense, don't exist in Japan. So he works as a domestic servant, which leaves him little time for study. He changes to a milk round, and then to a job in a printing shop. Some of his friends are selling their blood to meet expenses: Matsumoto doesn't look as if he has much to spare. We see him next as a dishwasher. But there comes a time when he has to remember that after all he is supposed to be a university student. A brief shot of a geography lecture in progress—"Japan's population: 226 to the square kilometre"—makes an important point here. And so we watch Matsumoto pawning his overcoat and scarf. (Kyoto is a bleak place in winter.) That buys a little macaroni. But books are out of the question. (Incidentally, are Japanese university libraries intended for the use of staff alone? But that is my own query, not Haar's.) For books Matsumoto must go along to a bookshop and do his reading on the spot. There is a shot of the bookseller searching along the shelves for a customer's request. We know it is the book that Matsumoto is deep in. An effective little scene as the bookseller slowly prizes it out of the student's reluctant hands: a show of precarious politeness all round, and underneath, the bookseller's irritation and the student's bitter resentment. This film tells us a lot about modern Japan as well as about students.

Matsumoto falls sick; his lungs are affected. His friend Mitsuko, an attractive girl-student, makes up her mind to take a job, secretly, in a tea-shop, to earn money for his medical expenses. An attempt to work a little romantic interest into a bleak documentary? It seems like that—until we recognise her, carrying a tray, dressed in a ridiculously short skirt, suddenly very plain and pathetically bandy-legged. Yes, one has seen that oneself—it is authentic. Finally other students come to the rescue and enough money is collected to send Matsumoto to hospital. We are content not to ask what happens next.

Film, we know, is an art, and Francis Haar is certainly an artist. But what are the statistics? Firstly, more than 300,000 university students in Japan must work in order to cover part of their expenses, and more than 50,000 of these must earn the whole. Secondly, *The Japanese Student News Service* (issue No. 5, December 31st, 1953) states that Kyoto University Welfare Consultative Council sent out 703 health questionnaires to students of that university, and 228 replies were received. Of these, 159 (i.e. 70 per cent.) admitted to sickness, and it transpired that 138 were suffering from T.B. Investigation revealed that—as the film implied—most of the patients had only discovered the nature of their illness after it had reached a serious stage.

The film ended with the remark that it had no solution to offer, but believed that the presentation of the problem was the first step towards finding a solution. Haar tells me that he hopes to exhibit *Today's Students, Japan's*

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Tomorrow in England. There is more to-do in England about providing common rooms than there is in Japan about providing hospital beds for consumptive undergraduates: English students had better know how their Japanese contemporaries are growing up.

AND when the student has finally contrived both to avoid T.B. and to achieve a degree? Then "*gakubatsu*" rears its head—the Japanese equivalent of the old school tie, but more rigidly organised than the latter ever was. The possessor of a Tokyo University or Kyoto University degree can be reasonably sure of a good job—particularly in the higher civil service—however disappointing he may have turned out to be. A graduate of Keio (which, incidentally, has a strong English Department) will be *persona grata* in business circles. A graduate of the University of Education, no matter what bureaucratic talents he may evince, had better be content with a teaching post. (The Far Eastern Commission in a directive to SCAP of April 1947 denounced discrimination in civil service appointments; but the seeds of democracy are apt to produce different flowers in different soils.) Similarly, Osaka University's "official" reputation is for engineering and medicine, and a student who has read some other subject must save himself as best he can. A boy's future, that's to say, is largely determined, not by his emergent gifts, but by the university which he has entered.

As for the hundreds of lesser universities—the pre-war high schools which were promoted to university status as a demonstration of what democracy really is ("aiming," as the education law of 1947 put it, "at the creation of universal culture")—well, employers can certainly afford to pick and choose. It's the old problem—I saw it, on a much smaller scale but more noisily propounded, in Egypt: "more are bred scholars than preferments can take off." It will soon be necessary for the street-walker and the nightwatchman to have a degree.

Tokyo-Kobe night train

THE journey is one long and versatile earthquake. Impossible to get off to sleep, until the body at last succumbs round about 4.30 a.m. And at 5 a.m. the compartment is full of the goblin-like union suits and early morning noises of my industrious travelling companions. (Better avoid the term "fellow-travellers.")

At such moments the aggravated foreigner rushes in where angels have certainly feared to tread—into the Lafcadio Hearn Myth. The national worship—I once nearly got a free drink in a night-club through being most inaccurately introduced to Mamma San as "the second Lafcadio Hearn"—of a *fin de siècle* oddity, a neurotic wanderer who (I strongly suspect) only settled in Japan because he married a Japanese wife in the first flush. One can see why at sensitive periods in their history the Japanese should find consolation in a foreigner who (immediately after landing) wrote off enthusiastically about their divinity, crying out, "*We* are the barbarians." And why they should ignore the rest of the story, the fact that (in Basil Hall Chamberlain's words) "his life was a succession of dreams which ended in nightmares." But a niche in the affections of the Japanese is not necessarily the same as a niche in English literature—a fact which neither native nor foreign teachers have made clear.

The Old Japan—well, perhaps Hearn's writings do have a certain antiquarian value, though Hokusai (working a hundred years earlier) seems to me more "modern," a more faithful observer of what still endures in Japanese life and character.

In any case, I can't say that I find Hearn's notion of old Japan particularly seductive—that unhumorous and rather sickly mixture of plum blossom and honourable bowel-spilling. (Sometime, over a cup of *saké*, I must ask my friends what they honestly feel about his panegyric on "The Japanese Smile.") And even the interesting bits are apt to be gummed up with his amateur Buddhism, the quasi-philosophising of a Spencerian romantic.

And I begin to suspect that the two myths—the Hearn Legend and the myth of the Duino Wasteland—are somehow connected. The Hearn Legend is received and fostered out of "respect for the writer." And the serious writer, like the *sensei*, is rather expected to stay out of the real world, in which wars and money are made. And perhaps Wastelanditis is in part the

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old device of fighting a foreign war to avert a civil disturbance. Both of them soporifics, perhaps, examples of that curious defensiveness—until you've won their affections—of this race.

Talking of the otherworldliness of the orthodox *sensei*—Japanese schoolteachers, having been encouraged to preach anti-militarism, are preaching peace so zealously that the government, painfully conscious of the difference between the two gospels, is now proposing to pass a law forbidding them all political activities except the right to vote. I'm afraid it won't work, though, for who wants to live in an Ivory Tower when the roof leaks and the central heating has gone?

It appears that there has been some trouble over a snowball battle: the schoolchildren split into two sides, wearing traditional white and red caps, and unfortunately the redcaps won. Enraged parents and local officials denounced pro-Red manœuvring on the part of the teachers, pointing for confirmation to the Communistic smirk on the face of the redcaps' abominable snowman.

The train is approaching Osaka—"Naniwa" it was called of old, "strong waves"—now wave upon wave of factory chimneys. The morning newspaper reports that a girl of fifteen has just died from after-effects of the Hiroshima bomb. Probably Hearn's most living book is *Kwaidan*—a collection of ghost stories. Japan is still haunted, and by an ever-increasing variety of spectres, ancient and modern.

And so these academic problems are part of the national problem. And the national problem is the problem of the world, carried a stage or two further than elsewhere. Too many people in too small a space. "During 1949 . . . the birth-rate was that of the Orient and the death-rate approached that of western Europe" (*Japan*, ed. Hugh Borton, New York, 1951). Whether you're interested in raising academic standards, or in improving conditions for students, or in saving the world, the answer seems to be one and the same.

No political device can do the trick: there's not that kind of magic in ideologies, whichever side wins the final snowball battle of the cold war. Large-scale emigration might, or might not, put off the day of reckoning. Applied science is, as ever, equivocal: it produces synthetic rice, but also more mouths to eat it. In the end there appear to be two alternatives. Either some more atomic bombs, aimed with greater care this time, so as to destroy the maximum of human life and the minimum of installations and dwellings, or population control. Either we have to kill off a lot of people or we have to prevent them from living. Education for birth control—absurd and disgusting? Not more so than the maintenance of huge, conscripted and half-starved armies. A practical impossibility? Then you must rely on a miracle.

But there does seem to be the shadow of a hope here. Over the past few years the birth-rate has shown a slow but steady decline: a result, it's said, of the government's vigorous campaign in the rural areas. No religious objection, no moral opposition—the peasant's wife is very ready to learn the wisdom of the West from the *hokenfu* (the equivalent of our district nurse). Of course, it sometimes prolongs her life, too.

We pull into Osaka station. A mass of human beings: a false step, a moment of panic, and they would spill over on to the tracks. Wooden, patient faces: so much energy and so much courage, with so little to work on: a country of busy mill-stones grinding each other down.

Alighting from the train, I feel a twinge of Wastelanditis.

Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only

The answer is, all of us.

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Kenneth Tynan

American Blues

The Plays of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams

I

"SINCE 1920," Arthur Miller has said, "American drama has been a steady, year-by-year documentation of the frustration of man": and the record supports him. Between the wars most of the serious American playwrights—Odets, for instance, Elmer Rice, Maxwell Anderson, Irwin Shaw, and Lillian Hellman—did their best work in the conviction that modern civilisation was committing repeated acts of criminal injustice against the individual. Their heroes were victims, such as Mio in *Winterset*, and they devoted themselves to dramatising the protests of minorities; it was thus that they ploughed the land cleared for them by O'Neill, the solitary pioneer bulldozer. For his long-sightedness they substituted an absorption in immediate reality; where he was the admonitory lighthouse, they were the prying torches. During the war their batteries ran out: since 1945 none of them has written a first-rate play. The mission of martyrology has been taken up by the younger generation, by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

Miller and Williams seem, on the face of things, to have even less in common than Ibsen and Bjørnson. Miller, a man of action, belongs to the thirties' tradition of social drama, while Williams, a poet *manqué*, looks ahead to a lyrical, balletic *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which (though I doubt whether he fully recognises the fact) words as such are likely to have less and less importance. Yet the two men share much. Both echo the boy in *Awake and Sing* who says: "We don't want life printed on dollar bills." Miller is a rebel against, Williams a refugee from the familiar ogre of commercialisation, the killer of values and the leveller of men. "You know, *knowledge*—ZZZZpp! *Money*—zzzzzpp! POWER! Wham! That's the cycle democracy is built on!" exults the Gentleman Caller in *The Glass Menagerie*. But this is not their only joint exploit. Both reserve their most impassioned utterance for one subject, into which they plunge headlong, sometimes floundering in self-pity, sometimes belly-diving into rhetoric, but often knifing straight and deep: the subject of frustration. Lady Mulligan, in Williams' latest play *Camino Real*, complains to Gutman, the proprietor of her hotel, that he has chosen to shelter some highly undesirable guests. Whereupon:

> *Gutman:* They pay the price of admission the same as you.
> *Lady M.:* What price is that?
> *Gutman:* Desperation!

Techniques change, but grand themes do not. Whether in a murder trial, a bullfight, a farce like *Charley's Aunt* or a tragedy like *Lear*, the behaviour of a human being at the end of his tether is the common denominator of all drama. When a man (or woman) arrives at

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self-knowledge through desperation, he (or she) has become the raw material for a great play. The stature of the work will depend on the dramatist's honesty and skill, but its cornerstone is already laid. Though they take the same theme, Miller and Williams build very differently. In European terms, Miller is the Scandinavian: he has in fact translated Ibsen, whose fierce lucidity, humourlessness, and "odour of spiritual paraffin" he shares. Williams, on the other hand, is the Mediterranean, the lover of Lorca, sensuous, funny, verbally luxuriant, prone to immersion in romantic tragedy. Miller's plays are hard, "patrist," athletic, concerned mostly with men. Williams' are soft, "matrist," sickly, concerned mostly with women. What links them is their love for the bruised individual soul, and its life of "quiet desperation." It takes courage, in a sophisticated age, to keep faith with this kind of love, and their refusal to compromise has led both Miller and Williams into some embarrassing pseudo-simplicities. Their reward is in characters like Joe Keller of *All My Sons*, Willy Loman of *Death of a Salesman*, John Proctor of *The Crucible*, Blanche DuBois of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Laura of *The Glass Menagerie*, Kilroy of *Camino Real*, who live together in the great theatrical line of flawed, victimised innocents.

II

ARTHUR MILLER, who was born in Brooklyn in 1915, achieved his first Broadway production at the age of twenty-nine. The play, *The Man Who Had All The Luck*, had a framework which Miller (himself a second son) later elaborated in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*: the relationship of two sons with their father. The protagonist is David, the elder, an unskilled garage hand in a midwestern town. His brother Amos, forcibly trained by Pat, a jealous and protective father, to become a baseball pitcher, gets nowhere, while the ignored David thrives, financially as well as maritally. His inability to fail makes David neurotic, and to deaden his sense of unworthiness he falls into the habit of ascribing his success to luck. In the final scene he is made to understand that "luck" is merely a word used by men less diligent than himself to explain his triumphs. "You made it all yourself," cries his wife, "It was always you." His hired man, the immigrant Gus, puts the play's case: a man must believe, he says, "that on this earth he is the boss of his life, not the leafs in the teacups, not the stars. In Europe I seen already millions of Davids walking around, millions. They gave up already to know that they are the boss. They gave up to know that they deserve this world." The point of the *drame à thèse* is weakened because the principal characters are too obviously pawns in Miller's hands: what stays in the mind is the craggy candour of the dialogue. Miller, like Williams, is committed to prose drama, in which both men have uncovered riches which make the English "poetic revival" seem hollow, retrogressive and—to use Cyril Connolly's new coinage—præteritist.

Pat, David's father, is guilty only by implication: Joe Keller in *All My Sons*, staged by Elia Kazan in 1947, is a criminal in the legal sense. Shadily, he has been acquitted of manufacturing faulty aircraft parts during the war, and when the play opens his partner is in gaol, taking the rap for him. Of Joe's two sons, one has been killed in action, and the other, Chris, intends to marry his brother's ex-fiancée, the convicted partner's daughter. Chris is a militant idealist ashamed of having survived the war; material possessions sicken him, unless they have been purely and honourably acquired—"Otherwise what you have is loot, and there's blood on it." Miller concentrates on two shifting relationships: between Chris and his girl, and between Chris and his father. Joe Keller (like Willy Loman) had to compromise in order to live; and Chris (like Biff in the later play) is overwhelmed by the revelation of paternal guilt. How can he marry the daughter of a man who was imprisoned because of his father's perjury? Miller solves this classic impasse with a smart stroke of melodrama: unconvincingly, Keller accepts the burden and shoots himself.

"I'm his father," says Keller at one point, "and he's my son, and if there's something bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head." This message, more symphonically orchestrated, reappears in Miller's best play, *Death*

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of a Salesman, which Kazan directed in 1948. *All Our Fathers*, as Daniel Schneider suggested, would be an appropriate alternative title. Willy Loman and his two sons, the sensualist Happy and the mysteriously retarded Biff, are ruined by their belief in "the wrong dream," the mystique of salesmanship. "What are you building?" says Ben, Willy's millionaire brother, "Lay your hand on it. Where is it?" Unlike most hero-victims, Willy is not cynical about the values which are corrupting him; he is pathetic because, brightly and unquestioningly, he reveres them. As the play begins Biff, the quondam college hero, has returned penniless to his Brooklyn home, where he finds his father going crazy with failure to sell. The ensuing action covers the next twenty-four hours: in a series of beautifully welded interlocking flashbacks, we pursue Willy's thoughts into the past, back to the germinal moment of calamity when he was surprised by Biff in a hotel room with a half-dressed tart. This encounter, with its implied destruction of the father-god, stunted Biff's career and left Willy with a load of remorse redoubled by the fact that he, too, was the unsuccessful one of two brothers. Memory explodes the cocoon of illusions within which he preserves his self-respect, and (ostensibly for the insurance money) he commits suicide.

The play is Miller's triumph in the plain style; it rings with phrases which have entered into the contemporary subconscious. "He's liked, but he's not—well liked"; "The woods are burning, boys"; Ben's complacent "The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy." More memorably, there is Mrs. Loman's anguished rebuke to her sons for having scorned their father:

> "Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the papers. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like a dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person."

Charley, Willy's neighbour, speaks an epitaph over him which has the same groping, half-articulate power:

> "And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law, or give you medicine . . . Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory."

There is a fair amount of otiose breast-beating in the script, and Miller's prose sometimes slips into a sentimental rhythm of despair which could be convicted of glibness. But the theatre is an impure craft, and *Death of a Salesman* organises its impurities with an emotional effect unrivalled in post-war drama.

WILLY LOMAN goes to his fate without knowing exactly why it has overtaken him. The heroes of Miller's last two plays are also defeated, but they know what forces have beaten them: the enemy in each case is identified. In 1950 he adapted *An Enemy of the People*, turning it into a racy contemporary pamphlet. His temperament chimed with what he describes as Ibsen's "terrible wrath," and the dilemma of Stockmann, the betrayed crusader, duplicated Miller's own, that of the lifelong democrat who learns, from the example of his own country, that majority rule is not infallible. Stockmann is vanquished by the pusillanimous stupidity of the mob, on which, in the original, he launches a furious attack. Miller softens it in translation, thereby forfeiting the objectivity which allowed even Ibsen's heroes their weaknesses. Anger is a great simplifier, and Miller is an angry writer. *An Enemy of the People* marks his decision to weight the scales in favour of the oppressed minority man.

"Before many can know something, *one* must know it": Stockmann's affirmation steers us towards *The Crucible*, Miller's most recent play, produced in New York last January. The bird's-eye compassion of *Salesman* has now been replaced by a worm's-eye sympathy which extends only to the "right-minded" characters. Though it draws plain contemporary parallels with its subject, the witch-hunt at Salem, it deals with not an overtly political play: it is the refusal of a stubborn intellect to enter into enforced allegiances. "I like not the smell of this 'authority'" says Proctor, the

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hero. In Salem, as in Stockmann's township, nonconformity was allied with sin, an attitude which Miller detests so savagely that the play often resembles the trial scene from *Saint Joan* with the Inquisitor's speech deleted. The inquisitors in *The Crucible* are unmotivated fiends, and the atmosphere in which they flourished is never explored or accounted for.

The action stays close to historical fact. A group of flighty wantons, charged with engaging in mildly orgiastic rites in a wood near Salem, hit on the notion of exculpating themselves by accusing their neighbours of having sent the devil into them. The ringleader, Abigail, swears her sister-conspirators to silence in a speech which exemplifies the gnarled, sinewy, 17th century prose which Miller employs:

"Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word . . . and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it. I saw Indians smash my dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down!"

The girls' accusations are believed; a tribunal is set up; and the hangings begin. Proctor's wife is arrested, and his attempts to exonerate her lead to his own arrest: in a fine, clinching line he demands: "Is the accuser always holy now?" If he confesses, giving a list of those who infected him with diabolism, he will be freed; if not, he will be executed. At their last meeting his wife tells him how another of the condemned died:

"Great stones they lay upon his chest until he plead aye or nay. They say he give them but two words. 'More weight,' he says. And died."

Head high as the drums roll, Proctor sacrifices himself for his principles, a commonplace "Victorian" martyrdom worthy of a mind much less subtle than Miller's. *The Crucible* is disturbing because it suggests a sensibility blunted by the insistence of an outraged conscience: it has the over-simplifications of poster art.

In *The Devils of Loudun*, a much more searching analysis of witch-hunting, Aldous Huxley mentions the euphoria of the "adrenaline addict," a type to which Miller seems at present to belong. "There are many people," Huxley says, "for whom hate and rage pay a higher dividend of immediate satisfaction than love," this satisfaction being derived from "their psychically stimulated endocrines." Bad temper, which produces cramp in the creative muscles, is an enemy of art; and though *The Crucible* is on the right side morally, socially and politically, it is the artistic equivalent of a closed shop. "For the Poet," said Sidney, "he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lyeth." *The Crucible*, full of affirmations, is also full of emotional half-truths: which will do for a leader-writer, but not for a playwright of Miller's giant stature.

III

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' genius has no social commitments, but many æsthetic ones. His faults, like Miller's, are the defects of his virtues. The present cast of Miller's mind traps him in the present, the male preserve wherein history is shaped, and the universal preoccupation is with action and incident; Williams trades in nostalgia and hope, the past and the future, obsessions which we associate most strongly with the great female characters—Marguérite Gautier, Cleopatra, Hedda Gabler, and Tchekov's women, none of whom cares for today half as much as she cares for yesterday or tomorrow. His plays thus have the static quality of dream rather than the dynamic quality of fact: they bring the drama of mood to what may be its final hothouse flowering.

Williams is a Southerner, born forty years ago in Columbus, Mississippi, and his work first reached Broadway when his "memory play," *The Glass Menagerie*, was produced in 1945. It turns a burning-glass on to a storm-proof family unit, insulated against life by its careful preservation of gentility. A stage direction reads:

The apartment faces an alley, and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetry, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation.

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Here live Amanda, garrulous and suffocatingly maternal, her cynical son Tom, and her crippled daughter Laura. Retrospectively, Tom tells the story of how he invited a Gentleman Caller to dinner as a possible beau for Laura, and how the Caller, affable though he was, revealed that he was already spoken for. Laura's spinsterhood is confirmed; Amanda's hopes are dashed; but neither of these minor disasters is made to sound mawkish. Williams' wry wit acts as a caustic to the wounds. In Amanda, fussy and conversationally archaic, he shows the perfection of his ear for human speech, and also the extent of his tact: she never becomes a grotesque. The play is not a major achievement, but its opacity is as precise and marvellous as a spider's web.

You Touched Me!, on which Williams collaborated with Donald Windham, is of interest only because it dealt (like *The Glass Menagerie*) with the impact of reality on illusions, in this case on two isolated, mutually infectious virgins; and because it was adapted from the short story of the same name by D. H. Lawrence, one of Williams' heroes. It was followed in 1947 by *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which was directed by Kazan, who seems to have an instinct for the best of both Miller and Williams. It is perhaps the most misunderstood of his plays: the English and French productions were both so blatantly sensationalised that Williams' underlying lyric fibre passed unnoticed. If Willy Loman is the desperate average man, Blanche DuBois is the desperate exceptional woman. Willy's collapse began when his son walked into a hotel apartment and found him with a whore; Blanche's when she entered "a room that I thought was empty," and found her young husband embracing an older man. In each instance the play builds up to a climax involving guilt and concomitant disgust. Blanche, nervously boastful, lives in the leisured past; her defence against actuality is a sort of aristocratic *Bovarysme*, at which her brutish brother-in-law Stanley repeatedly sneers. Characteristically, Williams keeps his detachment, and does not take sides: he never denies that Stanley's wife, in spite of her sexual enslavement, is happy and well-adjusted, nor does he exaggerate the cruelty with which Stanley reveals to Blanche's new suitor the secrets of her nymphomaniac past. The play's weakness lies in the fact that the leading role lends itself to grandiose overplaying by unintelligent actresses, who forget that when Blanche complains to her sister about Stanley's animalism, she is expressing, however faintly, an ideal:

> "Such things as art—as poetry and music—such kinds of new light have come into the world since then! . . . That we have to make *grow*! And *cling* to, and hold as our flag! In this dark march toward whatever it is we're approaching. . . . *Don't—don't* hang back with the brutes!"

When, finally, she is removed to the mental home, we should feel that a part of civilisation is going with her. Where ancient drama teaches us to reach nobility by contemplation of what is noble, modern American drama conjures us to contemplate what might have been noble, but is now humiliated, ignoble in the sight of all but the compassionate.

In 1948 Williams reworked an earlier play, *Summer and Smoke*. Its heroine, Alma, is Blanche ten years younger: a Southern virgin concealing beneath "literary" affectations a sense of inadequacy in the presence of men. Her next-door neighbour, a notorious rake, tries to seduce her and is boldly repulsed. He shows her an anatomy chart, and explains that the human body is a tree inhabited by three birds, the brain, the belly, and the genitals: where, he asks, is the soul of which she speaks and for which, in Spanish, her name stands? Ironically, he ends up reformed, whereas Alma, her sexual instincts newly awakened, moves to the other extreme: they exchange attitudes, passing almost without contact. *Summer and Smoke*, a needlessly symbolic morality play, is sentimental in that its characters are too slight to sustain the consuming emotions which are bestowed on them.

Nobody could say that *The Rose Tattoo* (1950) did not contain large characters. It is the most thoroughgoing star vehicle of the last ten years, the fullest expression of Williams' romanticism, written for his adored Anna

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Magnani, whose shaky acquaintance with English unfortunately prevented her from playing the leading part. Here Williams pleads the cause of sexual love as its own justification. "So successfully," he says in his preface, "have we disguised from ourselves the intensity of our own feelings, the sensibility of our own hearts, that plays in the tragic tradition have begun to seem untrue." At a time when Miller's plays were growing colder and more intellectualised, Williams' blazed hotter and more sensuous. His heroine is a poor Sicilian immigrant whose husband, a truck-driving smuggler with a fabulous capacity for sexual devotion, has been shot. She learns to her horror that her man had been faithless to her, but the realisation does not prevent her from joyously taking as her new lover a man who physically resembles the dead ideal. The play's complex structure—short scenes linked by evocative snatches of music—is too poetic for its theme, but the virtuosity of the writing, alternately ribald and pathetic, is tremendous. Does it alternate between tragedy and farce? That is because it was meant for a great actress, whose gift it is to switch emotional gear, change from a Siddonsesque pose to a bout of nose-picking without a moment's hesitation. Williams' fault, as in *Streetcar*, was to have overestimated English-speaking actresses. It would take a Magnani to play the scene in which Serafina, the heroine, entertains her new lover, out of whose pocket, as the poetic tension mounts, there falls a neatly packaged contraceptive. Sardou never asked as much of Bernhardt, nor D'Annunzio of Duse.

Kazan renewed his association with Williams in the spring of 1953, when he directed the violently controversial *Camino Real*. This is a phantasmagoria of decadence, as limpidly rebellious to modern civilisation as a Bix Beiderbecke trumpet solo is to a Paul Whiteman orchestration. The published text has a unity never achieved by the acting script. It carries to its conclusion Williams' dictum: "I say that symbols are nothing but the natural speech of drama." In a preface he adds: "I have read the works of 'thinking playwrights,' as distinguished from us who are permitted only to feel. . . ." The result is a tranced play of hypersensitivity, a weird drug-work of wit, terror, and inertia.

It is set in a mythical Central American coastal town. Stage left is the Seven Seas Hotel, where live Byron, Casanova, and Marguérite Gautier, ghosts of the aristocratic way of life; stage right are a pawnbroker's shop, a fortune-teller's tent, and a flophouse, where, among the outcasts, we encounter the Baron de Charlus. On the Camino Real love is forbidden and "hermano" is a dirty word. Upstage is an arch, giving on to a desert, where a hot wind blows and whither no one dares travel. Williams' hero is Kilroy, the new arrival at this fetid microcosm of modern life: the embodiment of youth and enterprise, he was once a prizefighter but had to abandon his career because: "I've got a heart in my chest as big as the head of a baby." He is elected the town butt, and the police deck him out in a clown's costume, complete with electrically-sparking nose. How does this simpleton fit in with the filth of the Camino Real? Williams answers the question in writing which seems too often to have been composed in a state of *kief*. He indulges in vague, roseate aphorisms; nor can he resist theatrical shortcuts such as a noisy aeroplane crash and *two* chases down the aisles and into the boxes of the theatre, devices which assist the play about as tellingly as a consignment of marijuana would help an anti-narcotics campaign. Yet out of the strident blare of the action, Williams' faith in Kilroy's truth, in a child's mistrust of phoneyness, emerges with overwhelming clarity. For those anarchists who escape he has undisguised sympathy. Byron, for example, says of his later works: "They seem to improve as the wine in the bottle—dwindles. . . . *There is a passion for declivity in this world*"; but when, having roused himself, he departs into the murderous desert, Williams gives him a splendid epitaph: "*Make voyages!—Attempt them!*—there's nothing else!"

Kilroy, too, attempts the voyage: but only after a serio-comic encounter with a character called the Gypsy, who organises and advertises the local fiesta, at which her daughter, in a loony parody of a fertility ritual, annually

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recovers her virginity. The Gypsy's garish cynicism ("File this crap under crap") struck the New York critics as the most recognisable thing in the play, along with Kilroy's seduction of the Gypsy's daughter, a grossly comic scene in which the two young people repeat to each other eight times the talismanic words: "I am sincere." Surviving a brisk attempt to murder him, Kilroy journeys through the perilous arch, accompanied by Don Quixote, that other liegeman of the lost cause, who ends the play with a movingly symbolic cry: "The violets in the mountains have broken the rocks!"

Many charges can be brought against *Camino Real*. It has too many italics, too many exclamation marks; it depends too much on boozed writing and aureate diction. Its virtue is in its affectionate championing of the flyblown, inarticulate stratum of humanity. Perhaps, when Quixote and Kilroy reach the snowy upper air of the unnamed mountains, they will become subjects for a play by Miller, whose artistic life is dedicated, like Shaw's, to a belief in progress towards an attainable summit. Williams' aspirations are imaginative and hence unattainable; and therein lies the difference between them.

Complementary, yet irreconcilable, Miller and Williams have produced the most powerful body of dramatic prose in modern English. They write with equal virtuosity, Williams about the violets, Miller about the rocks. The vegetable reinforces the mineral; and the animal, a dramatic element feared or ignored in the English theatre, triumphantly reinforces both.

Alan Ross

Arctic Waking

Sky like a dog rose draws blood,
The tide mirrors my sailed love
Through clouds of sea foamed green:
The white gull fastens on the skyline.

Foam-flecked the mooned wake curves,
An ocean grown white with roses;
Recessions of suns draw tides, coppering
The sea's back, the scalloped hair of mermaids.

Shells bear retentive music through husks
Of night; my love's hair floats green, like
Some Ophelia's cold and wild, the flowers
Of her eyes scattered under black water.

The free gull moves across white horses,
The dream grows dry with frozen thirst.
At dawn, the convoy alters course;
The sun comes up and slowly bursts.

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William Plomer

Atheling Grange: or, The Apotheosis of Lotte Nussbaum

From a Sussex newspaper, October, 1953:

> *"HOUSEKEEPER MISSING—Miss Lotte Nussbaum (48), who came to this country as a refugee from Nazi Germany before the war, is reported missing from Spindrift, Hydrangea Avenue, Atheling-on-Sea, where she has for some years resided as housekeeper to Mrs. Elvaston-Clunch.*
>
> *As Miss Nussbaum's shopping-basket is also missing, it is thought that she may have gone out to gather blackberries or mushrooms, and may be suffering from loss of memory. Search parties have failed to find any trace of the missing woman."*

I

A HEAVY mist. A muffled sea.
A cloth of cobwebs veils the grass.
Upstairs alone the refugee
  Sees autumn in her glass:

A touch of autumn in the air,
The knife of autumn in the heart
Of one too constantly aware
  Of living half apart.

Is comfort peace? Can it restore
The severed root within the mind?
Domestic service evermore
  Is not what hope designed:

Kindly and rich and not a fool
The widow whom she housekeeps for,
But unadventurous, so cool,
  So English, such a bore.

She knows the very ones to look for—
Fresh, firm, not too mature—
There'll only be herself to cook for,
  A secret epicure!

Today the harmless Mrs. Clunch
Went up to London on her own,
And Lotte, dreamy after lunch,
  Feels even more alone:

She has no one to whom to turn
And reminisce of those lost lives
The autumn smell of leaf and fern
  So poignantly revives;

It quickens an old appetite,
This dank and thrilling smell;
She feels a craving now to bite
  Mushroom or Chanterelle;

Off with a basket she will go
To find if, where the fields begin,
Some palatable fungi grow,
  And if so, bring them in;

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II

Lotte acquired upon her native hills
The caution of a fungivore,
Knew how to look a *Giftpilz* in the gills
And where for *Steinpilz* one had best explore,
So now with confidence she reconnoitres,
Steps forward, backward, stoops, intently
loiters.

Though no mycophagist could be more eager,
She finds she isn't doing well,
After an hour her harvesting is meagre—
Two Puffballs, and a not too fresh Morel;
But strolling on beyond her usual range
She comes to the deserted Atheling Grange.

III

Where formerly curlews were calling
And orchises fell with the hay
The last of the meadows are falling
To bungalows gnawing their way;

The seaboard is doubly eroded—
To seaward by gale-driven water,
And inland, where fields are outmoded,
By inroads of bricks and of mortar;

But still, though its owners have died out,
An island of ilex encloses
A nineteenth-century hide-out
Once lovely with lawns and with roses;

The owls, who succeeded its owners,
Would quit it with screeches tonight
If they knew that the place is now known as
A "ripe-for-development" site.

The state of the place is appalling—
What is wrongly described as a shambles;
Everywhere ivy is crawling
And striving to strangle the brambles;

With bunches of bats on the ceilings
And droppings of rats in the hall,
The decline of the Grange is complete and
At any time now it may fall.

Everywhere brambles are clinging
And creepers are climbing and creeping,
The nettles are ready for stinging,
The willows have reason for weeping;

The woods were cut down in the twenties,
The farm was sold off at a loss,
The lodge is kept only by woodlice,
The gateposts are padded with moss;

Bindweed has smothered the greenhouse,
The summer-house under the yew
Is now just a cannot-be-seen house
That commands an invisible view.

O house once delightfully lived in,
O Atheling Grange, did they build you
For dry rot and wet rot to feed on,
A medium for mould and for mildew?

Why ask such an imbecile question?
That rhetorical style has gone by,
And nothing would be more surprising
Than to hear the old ruin reply.

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IV

THOUGH Lotte is aware how torn her coat is,
Full steam ahead she ploughs and pushes
Tank-like through snags and tangled thorny bushes,
Quite undeterred by wire or warning notice,
Convinced this *Hintergarten* she has found
Will prove to be her happy hunting-ground.

How right she is—but God knows how she knew it!
She's in a mycophil's Utopia
Where autumn, from a golden cornucopia,
Has tipped out every sort of Cèpe and Blewit.
She fills her basket quickly. New to her
Truffles one doesn't have to disinter;

Not new to her, but never yet so keen,
So *appetitlich* and so rich
That mushroom smell; nor has she ever seen
The Beefsteak Fungus growing in a ditch;
Here on a stump some tender Buff Caps quiver,
There Plutuns swells, like Strasburg goose's liver;

And peering downward through a rusty grating
Into what used to be the cellars
She sees there, prettily proliferating,
A multitude of little beige umbrellas,
Throngs of a choice and edible Boletus
That seem to say "Come down, my dear, and eat us!"

"*Embarras de richesse!*" she might exclaim,
If she could coin so French a phrase—
So many kinds she doesn't know by name,
All ready to be cooked in different ways:
But who to feed? She yearns to summon up
Her long-lost kin to sit with her and sup.

"*Himmel!*" she sighs . . . And at that very word
Celestial choirs inflate the breeze,
Die ganze Vogelschar gets busy in the trees,
And then a band—a German band—is heard
Playing a waltz by Waldteufel or Strauss,
And all the lights light up inside the house.

"*Himmel!*" she cries. And so it is—she's right!
Across the new-mown lawn advance
Her long-lost family, arrayed in white,
Her parents leading in a lively dance
Her brother, sisters, nieces, uncles, aunts,
With crowns and harps—a most unearthly sight!

Oh, what a welcome for Miss Nussbaum! See,
All's *himmelhoch* and *himmelblau*!
Heaven is hers, and she is Heaven's now!
She's disembodied, disencumbered, free!
Lotte is free! . . . Tomorrow Mrs. Clunch
Will have no drudge to cook her blasted lunch.

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Herbert Luthy

Democracy and its Discontents

II. France

IN France, there is politics. And then there is the state. They are two very different things.

For decades France has been seeking a working political arrangement, without finding one; and the observer who sees only the façade—the cabinet, parliament, and the parties—wonders how a country in so chaotic a political condition can exist at all, let alone pretend to be a Great Power. The explanation is to be found in the fact that the administration of the state functions so well—or rather, for well or ill, with so automatic a routine—that the only sphere of activity it concedes to politics is that of pure and irrelevant ideology.

Opening a French constitutional handbook, one finds hardly a mention, except perhaps in an incidental footnote, of any of the great institutions on which the permanence of France actually depends. Instead, there is only the exposition, ruthlessly logical, of an abstract doctrine: all sovereignty stems from the people, which expresses its will by the election of deputies and senators; parliament, ingeniously divided into chamber and senate—engine and brake—formulates this will of the people into acts, decrees, and resolutions; and the government, which is responsible to parliament, translates these decrees into orders of officialdom, which in turn simply carries them out. There is no mention of the ministries which remain when the ephemeral minister departs. There is no mention of the Council of State, which has sovereign jurisdiction over the administrative apparatus, which alone establishes by its jurisprudence the real content of acts of parliament, and which, through its direct role as eternal adviser to governments, almost always gets its way in the shaping of policy, because it has authority and endurance while the government has neither. There is no mention of the general staff of the financial administration, which can "interpret" the budget and regulate the dealings of the Treasury as autocratically as the Council of State can the laws. For none of these institutions "stems from the people." They are the machinery of state of the absolute monarchy, brought to its logical extreme of perfection by the First Empire; and, with the fall of the crowned heads, real sovereignty has passed to this machinery itself, which works in the background, unpretentiously, anonymously—a monarchy without a king.

This administration has impressed its features upon the entire life of the country. No parish council can install a water-main, pave a road, or have the roof of a school repaired, until the operation has been approved with stamp and signature by six successively senior authorities of the central administration, from Sub-Prefect right up to the Treasury in Paris; with goodwill on every side, this approval takes at least a year, and should anyone along this lengthy line have misgivings, it will never be gained at all. A whole jurisprudence of the Council of

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State has systematically denied local councils any initiative whatsoever, whether in the matter of a public bathing-place or a local refuse-disposal service.

To the question: who governs France? the first and most important answer would have to be: ninety bailiffs of the Ministry of the Interior—the Ministry, not the Minister, who has long been unable to dismiss his Prefects, and may at most promote them.

A HISTORY of France could be written in terms of her developing administration: unswerving, prosaic, tenacious—and in the deepest sense, unpolitical; an administration which pedantically, unimaginatively, and with due formality took the long-term view, and in the end always recouped what dynastic or ministerial politics had lost. For, in short-sightedness and caprice, French politics, whether of her kings and their courtiers or of her statesmen and popular assemblies, have rarely fallen short of those of any Balkan state. There have been periods—among them some of the happiest in French history—when the country was ruled with the elegant irresponsibility of the gamester or the petty slyness of a shady lawyer. Such a period was the 18th century, when the last monarchs of the Ancien Régime squandered an empire, transformed the treasury of the richest country of the age into a notorious casino, and auctioned off the offices and honours of a kingdom; such was the Second Empire, an Offenbach operetta without the happy ending; such the last decades of the Third Republic, that rustic idyll between two world wars. . . . Yet this mischief left the foundations intact; at its worst, the damage was transient; and always, when the hangover had passed, it was precisely these periods of frivolity which were transfigured in memory into "the good old days."

This is the miracle of France. The state had become immune to the politics of its own leaders; quite simply, it could no longer be diverted from the deeply rutted tracks of routine. Forty kings and almost as many revolutions and *coups d'état* came and went; yet, from the time of Philippe Auguste onwards, a growing army of officials, lawyers, clerks, and book-keepers kept watch, that no claim might ever go out of date, no opportunity irretrievably missed, no investment irrevocably lost.

The continuity which has been assured by this administration is first and foremost the continuity of the administration itself, which has survived every dynasty, every revolution, and every catastrophe. Behind the constantly changing façades of feudal, absolute, or liberal monarchy, of empires and republics, the great institutions and corporations of the state—and accordingly the state itself—have remained essentially the same. The *noblesse de robe* of the Ancien Régime and the *Grands Corps d'État* of the Republic are the same in spirit and the same in kind. Through the corridors, grey with age and cold as the grave, of the Palais de Justice in Paris, the former royal *Parlement*, there walk incarnate all the raven-like figures, in the very robes and ermine, with the very faces and gestures, that Daumier once immortalised, and which even to him seemed like ghosts from the past. The judicature, if more slowly and less accountably than any mills of God, may, in the great verbal tourneys of the *éloquence judiciaire*, work in a floodlight of publicity which sets the great barrister on a level with the leading lights of literature, the theatre, and the film; but the supreme courts, which control the state itself—its legislation, its finances, and its policy towards the individual—are hidden from the common sight, and no breath of wind troubles in them the venerable dust of centuries. The *Conseil d'État* has no hesitation in interpreting, on the basis of proclamations or police regulations of Francis I or Louis XIII, a new act passed by the National Assembly; and by this ruling, which alone is authoritative, it diverts the intended innovation into centuries-old channels. As late as the years immediately preceding the war, the *Cour des Comptes* kept the books of the Republic with the same immemorial scraps of paper, the same quill pens, and the same jumbled piles of ledgers as were used by the Chamber of Accounts of the last of the Capets; only since the Second World War has it discovered the typewriter and the comptometer.

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THE dull and stunted life of the majority of French villages and provincial towns, whose architecture bears witness to their former greatness and vitality, is the work of this centralised bureaucracy. It has arranged the road and rail map of France to form a spider's web centred on Paris; and in this net everything is caught—men, goods, and energy. It has laid the country waste and drained her life-force into the capital.

There is hardly a firm of any size which does not feel called upon to maintain, at great cost, its head office in Paris, the place of prestige, of useful connections, and at the same time the only place where, in the inevitable contacts with administrative bodies, the dreadful red-tape can be untangled. Even the agriculture of this peasant country has orientated itself on Paris; or, where it could establish no connection with the "Paris net," has become fossilised as an archaically closed village economy. More than half the French national income is concentrated into nine departments, a tenth of the country, centred on the Paris area—the same nine departments which for the last century have monopolised the entire population increase of France, including that by immigration, whilst the remaining nine-tenths of the country have, since the middle of the 19th century, been gradually depopulated.

Half of France is, for all practical purposes, completely excluded from the modern marketing system, being represented in it neither as producer nor as buyer. France, the land of peasants, has no organised provincial markets whatever: the agricultural market of France, an even more astonishing monument to permanence than all the administrative relics of tradition, is the Paris *Halles*, that picturesque, overflowing, congested "Belly of Paris," fantastically located in the centre of a great city, cut off from any railway system, hemmed in by narrow lanes in which trucks and barrows pile up. For a wide area round *Les Halles*, the traffic arteries are choked with vehicles carrying their mountains of boxes and baskets and carcasses from station and slaughter-house. Fruit, piled high, overflows into all the neighbouring streets. A whole district of the city is transformed every night into a swamp of fish and blood and the rotting remains of vegetables. The storage capacity is so inadequate that in the warm months a quarter of the food supplies go bad on the spot.

But the place is sacred. Here the little Capetian city of the 12th century already had its market; here Napoleon III built the present market-halls, which like so many French antiquities were pioneer achievements of technology, marvels of the age of the earliest iron structures. The century since the Second Empire has managed to extend the installations by exactly one-fifth: further space was just not available. Meanwhile, the pioneer achievement of former years has become an archaism and an economic folly, perhaps the most absurd legacy that centuries of centralisation have bequeathed to France.

Transport from one of the Paris stations to the central market at *Les Halles* costs more than from the furthest corner of Southern France to Paris; yet the box of tomatoes from Cavaillon, the lettuce from Perpignan, the cabbage from Brittany must flow, not merely through Paris, but through this bottle-neck in the centre of Paris; they must complete a journey of five hundred or a thousand miles, with five transhipments from the railway by truck and handcart to the market-stall and from there back to the railway, bringing with them the dirt and decay of *Les Halles,* to fetch up finally in Bordeaux or Lille, two or three hundred miles from their place of origin. The transactions in the nocturnal confusion of this hall of magic elude all efforts towards accurate statistics, but it is generally estimated that from a third to a half of the products brought here from the provinces are sent back to the provinces every day, burdened with the heavy, pointless handling-costs and middlemen's profits of this entrepôt.

Here is skimmed off the exorbitant margin between the all too low prices paid to the producer and the all too high prices paid by the consumer in France. Every attempt at an intelligent price policy, even at the rationalisation of the process of price-fixing, is repulsed by this impregnable fortress. As late as the autumn of 1952 an attempt to transfer at least part of the business of *Les Halles* to the capacious

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modern warehouses of the area surrounding the southern railway terminals of Paris, where they could be carried on with half the personnel and at half the cost, was frustrated by the devotion of the Paris City Council to the text of ancient laws, and the seven-hundred-year-old monopoly of *Les Halles* was once again legally confirmed. For the central market is not simply a commercial installation—as such its absurdity and economic perniciousness have been undisputed for decades—it is an Institution. In this terribly narrow labyrinth every function, every position, every table and every bench, every shelf and every square foot of pavement on which a crate can be deposited has been allotted for generations to an oligarchy of licence-holders, dealers, agents, middlemen, operators, valuers, and porters, each of whom exacts his toll for the contribution which, although totally unnecessary, is his by right and tradition.

THIS administrative structure has impressed itself upon the character of the French bourgeoisie more profoundly than the latter, even in the hundred and fifty years since the Revolution, has affected it. For the Third Estate, which in 1789 proclaimed itself the representative of the nation, was not an assembly of manufacturers and merchants, still less of peasants and artisans; it was composed almost exclusively of lawyers—of judges, barristers, notaries, councillors—trained and matured in the shapeless judicial apparatus that the monarchy had set up over France, and which it had, since the time when the establishment and disposal of more and more legal appointments had become the normal source of income for the Ancien Régime, complicated to the point of absurdity with parasitical higher courts and commissions. This stratum of culture, these *gens de robe*, unhappily sandwiched between the aristocracy and the common people, and deeply unified even in their vagaries and humours, provided almost the entire political personnel of the French Revolution.

The appropriation of the state apparatus by legalistic bureaucrats is just as fundamental a feature of the Revolution as the appropriation of the land by the peasants. Moreover, it was the mercantile state of the Ancien Régime that had created the bourgeoisie as a social class. The great fortunes and the family dynasties which are so characteristic of French economic development were founded in the tenure of offices of state, or were gained under state patronage—in royal manufactures and monopolies, in tax-farming, in army contracts and other state activities, but above all in the great financial operations undertaken on behalf of the Court—operations which, during the 18th century, had developed into a state-organised pillage of the wealth of the people. It is this tradition of the mercantile state, which made of every major economic activity a publicly protected appointment, usually endowed with the dignity of office, which has allowed so little private enterprise and so little of the genuine "spirit of capitalism" to emerge in France.

THE picture drawn above of a fundamentally harmonious and undeviating administrative history, and of a present completely determined by this history, contains a great part of France—but not her whole being, and especially not her conscious awareness of herself. Or rather, it is merely a backcloth to this awareness, the pre-history of what each Frenchman feels is his *real* history, which begins in 1789 with sudden, powerful pathos. What happened before that date is looked on as a book of legends. At first the pictures are yellow and faded: Vercingetorix and Clovis; Charlemagne, the great ancestor; and Hugh Capet, the founder of the dynasty; Saint Louis, dispensing law under his oak-tree; Philip the Fair and the tales of horror of the Tour de Nesle. Then they become more recognisable, more lifelike, as the photographs in a family album come nearer to us as we turn the pages. Until, with the meeting of the States General at Versailles, there dawns the immediate, feverishly agitated present: from now on, an unending succession of dramatic scenes, in which the people themselves appear as actors in the struggle between light and darkness,

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freedom and tyranny, right and wrong; in which they storm the Bastille, erect barricades, cry "Long Live" and "Down With," surging to and fro between generous victories and bloody defeats.

Since 1789 time has not been counted by centuries, decades, or years, but by days—days which belong to the personal biography of every Frenchman and are invoked in every speech and every manifesto, without the year having to be added. Anyone who has not grown up amid this history, and does not know its dates as well as he knows the birthdays of his nearest relatives, may easily feel bewildered when, at a public meeting, the new feudal lords are challenged to make their 4th of August, when the spirit of August 10th is conjured up, or when the people are called upon to defend the Republic against a new 18th Brumaire or 2nd December, 16th May, or 6th February. On such occasions one is aware that members of a family are discussing personal experiences—and that it is a family which for six generations has buried none of its hatchets.

For all these dates represent not historical recollection but immediate actuality. When, every few months, the Republic is declared in danger and the "defence of the Republic" is organised, one feels that what is being endangered and defended is something very different from the parliamentary form of government which for seventy years—save in a few romantic circles and aristocratic salons—has not been questioned by anyone or anything except its own impotence. The Republic which is always threatened, because never realised, is that of the principles of '89, of human rights, of liberty, equality, fraternity, of Reason and Virtue—the work left unfinished by the forefathers, before whose magnificent conception all the actual Republics seem like feeble parodies. The Great Revolution and all the little ones which followed it have left behind as their legacy the myth of the unfinished Revolution, which again and again contests the legitimacy of every existing régime. Thus the great national epic is acted out in forms and formulæ which have very little reference to the present and its problems, but considerable reference to great and stirring memories. History has become pure ideology—the revolutionary ideology of a conservative country: that is the apparent paradox.

Certainly, the Jacobin creed of the Radical-Socialist Party for instance, that pillar of the Third Republic and perhaps even of the Fourth, or of the notables who enter local and national assemblies with such disturbing labels as Left-Wing Republican or Independent Socialist, will frighten nobody. Yet they all claim to be children of the Revolution; and from the harmless Radical, from the enlightened parish clerk of Clochemerle to the ubiquitous Communist, there are only differing gradations of one and the same philosophy of life. Herriot and Cachin, Daladier and Thorez have had no difficulty in finding a common language; and it is a fact that large groups of electors, especially in the word-intoxicated south, have gone over in a body from the Radical to the Communist vote, without seeming even to notice the distinction—a confusion which would clearly be unthinkable between the liberal and the Communist parties in other countries. But France has no liberal tradition, and her liberal practice is really only a lax and tacit acceptance—a betrayal or corruption, the Jacobins would say—of the revolutionary ideology. Reality and rhetoric run side by side but never meet.

"*La Révolution est un bloc*": this famous remark by Clemenceau has remained the creed of French politicians and writers and teachers of history; they will not allow any derogation from the great myth, which is handed down whole and undigested from generation to generation. One part of this *bloc* is the Revolution as extolled by every official spokesman of the Republic and by every revolutionary speaker of the Left; the Revolution which proclaimed the right of the individual, the rights of man, popular sovereignty, liberty and equality, and swept away feudal rights, class privilege, and many ancient abuses and malpractices. The other part is the frenzied course of this Revolution, which never dared to put into practice either human rights or popular sovereignty; which created model constitutions by the dozen, and never applied them; which began with the storming of an empty

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Bastille, and went on to fill every prison in the land to bursting-point; which industrialised the process of conviction and execution; which first created the "People's Democracy" of the Terror and of compulsory unanimity, of thought-crimes, and of denunciation as the supreme duty of the citizen; which proclaimed the liberation of peoples, and littered Europe with satellite states ruled and ransacked from Paris. Yet these two parts of the Revolution are "one and indivisible" like the Republic itself; they must be approved or rejected "*en bloc*"; and a republican conviction proves itself by this unqualified Yes or No.

THE fossilised state-structure of absolutism and the fossilised ideology of the Jacobin Republic belong together as parts of the same historical heritage, and both are equally remote from liberal democracy. There are many reasons for Communist influence in France; but the fact that Communism could make itself so much at home in the ideological world of the French Left, and appear so naturally as its legitimate heir, is not a riddle and hardly a problem; for it comes of the same stock. As an ideology Communism has its roots not in the working-class movement but in the Jacobin Utopia; and even the combination in the French Communist Party of French chauvinism and Russian subservience can be completely explained in terms of a projection: the Great Revolution, which began one hundred and fifty years ago in France and remained unfinished, has been completed in the Soviet Union; there, the true Republic is now at home; and even if anti-Communist propaganda reports about Russia were true, this could not shake the faith of those who as schoolboys have made the acquaintance of the dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety and the Reign of Terror as symbols of republican vigilance. In the world of ideological abstractions and romantic picture-books of history in which the French Left lives, the Bolshevik Revolution is only the last and most thorough of all the glorious Revolutions of France; and the dispute over it means hardly more than another of those backward-looking family disputes between Girondins and the Mountain, supporters of Danton and supporters of Robespierre, Communards and men of Versailles, which are still fought out with undiminished passion by historians and ideologists, and yet denote no more than shades of opinion within a single republican family. Here no dividing line can be drawn without making the whole intoxicating world of revolutionary mystification wobble—a world without which French political life is as little imaginable as her social life would be without its wine.

Thus this deeply conservative country has no conservative party. And this is no mere idiosyncrasy of nomenclature. The fact is that, in the debates of French political life, no one has ever felt the need for that indispensable minimum of objective and serious discussion, discrimination between what is feasible and what is not, respect for one's opponent, moderation of tone and sense of responsibility, without which a democratic state could not survive—if national affairs were really determined by political argument.

But in these battles, fought so passionately, what is determined is at most a change of ministers in Paris. The irresponsibility of these political polemics is matched by their ineffectiveness. Practical decisions, from the budget of the smallest village in the Pyrenees through the disposition of the funds of the national budget or the government of a world-wide empire, are the business of an administrative hierarchy which is virtually isolated from all the political fluctuations. And though this administration may sometimes accept a compromise with the Minister when parliament insists, it can afford to bide its time until the Minister has disappeared with all his notions, and one more pliable has come to take his place.

To take an example: the entire social legislation of the Radical-Socialist whirlwind at the turn of the century, which had been approved by parliament, signed by the responsible ministers, and officially gazetted with the force of law, slumbered in the archives for three decades until it reached final oblivion, without even a start being made on its application: it

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simply never reached the stage of administrative enforcement. The Minister can grant favours, devote particular attention to the interests of his constituency or of the constituencies of his closest parliamentary friends, recommend subsidies or state contracts; in particular he can distribute with generosity several hundred ribbons of the *Légion d'honneur* which the annual honours list of his Ministry puts at his disposal: so much is permitted him by the rules of the parliamentary game. He is not permitted to carry out a personal policy, and he would never even have time to try. The chief function of succeeding Ministers is to act as a buffer between the "Left-Wing" parliament and the "Right-Wing" state; and a good, competent Minister, respected for his soundness, is one who—reversing the constitutional principle which regards him as the executor of the will of the people as embodied in parliament—makes himself the mouthpiece and the defender of the competent officials in his Ministry against the incompetence and demagogy of parliament. But, whether good or bad, pliable or recalcitrant, he will soon be exhausted by this buffer role; wear and tear on governments is part of the cost of this system in which the executive is inescapably ground between a parliament which regards itself as the government and an administration which regards itself, without qualification, as the state.

In the seventy years of the Republic, France has literally never had a working majority in parliament, or a coalition government, which could agree on even the fundamentals of a coherent policy; nor has she ever given a government time to work out and introduce such a policy. France is not governed but administered; and it is precisely the apparent political instability which guarantees the stability and immortality of the administrative state. Thanks to this division of labour, politics can safely become a battlefield of ideology, abstraction, extremism, verbal uproar, and demagogy: all this scarcely affects the existence of France as a state. Political activity cancels itself out. The prerequisite as well as the result of rhetorical intemperance is that the engine should not be in gear.

But there is another side to the elevation of political discussion into the realm of pure ideology. The people of France and her politicians, even if they pay homage to traditional Jacobin eloquence, are not in any sense made up of exalted idealists. The French citizen is armed against the extravagances of rhetoric with a healthy scepticism and a calculating realism. He can distinguish sharply and intuitively between principles and practice. But this is not particularly favourable either to the principles or to the practice. He reads his daily paper without believing a word it says, and is quite capable, after savouring its prose for years, to vote against all its opinions. But the fact that he mistrusts all information on principle does not make his own information any the more reliable. He regards the politicians who appear before him to solicit his vote, often rightly and sometimes wrongly, as ambitious clowns, if not worse; but the fact that this estimate is axiomatic makes the political atmosphere no healthier.

The well-known remark about the French citizen having his heart on the Left and his wallet on the Right is probably correct; but it is extremely doubtful whether, in the long run, his wallet has fared better than his heart. The compromise between the two—combining generosity of principle with pettiness of practice—produces not balance but distortion. In it, the opposite of high-flown ideology is represented not by the civic conscience of a conservative realism but by a swarm of narrow-minded local and specialised interests, whose lack of consideration for the general interest of the nation is, if possible, even more radical, and certainly more far-reaching, than the most uninhibited political demagogy.

From Left to Right on the parliamentary benches, the ideology becomes rather more watery and the representation of special interests rather more concentrated and powerful. But these are proportions, not boundary-lines. It is true that the representatives of the great financial and industrial syndicates have traditionally preferred to occupy the "Left Centre" of parliament—that small, select, and extremely loose group which held the parliamentary balance throughout the history of the

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Third Republic, and, despite their tiny numbers, formed an inexhaustible reservoir of ministers. Yet the champions of the wine-producing, brandy-burning, beetroot-growing, shopkeeping or road-haulage interests are scattered over all the benches and parties, from Left to Right; and their invincibility is due to the looseness of their organisation, and to the fact that their solidarity is confined strictly to the particular interest of their clients—an interest devoid of all connection with any wider political or economic policy, and one which can therefore be advocated with complete irresponsibility. The deputy can wear his heart on the Left and his wallet on the Right as easily as the citizen; and the traditional radical, who demands in the same flight of rhetoric the sovereignty of the nation and of the individual, free enterprise, protection for the retail trade, the reconciliation of nations, the Rhine frontier, a balanced budget, and above all state subsidies for alcohol consumption and the public purchase of wine surpluses, has certainly never been aware of any inconsistencies in his political philosophy.

THE more limited and fragmentary this representation of special interests, the less it is likely to come into contact, let alone conflict, with the grandiose principles professed. With rare exceptions, it is not a question of systematically defending group interests that are nationally organised, or even conceived on a national basis—such a defence would at least demand a certain widening of outlook and policy. Instead, every deputy, whatever the party to which he proclaims his allegiance and whatever the general opinions he may hold, champions the wishes of his local electors, and especially of the influential personalities among them, case by case, individually and inconsistently. At this level there is never any conflict of conscience between burning enthusiasm for progress in general and the artificial preservation of all traditional privileges in particular.

The French constitution makes no provision for the representation by deputies of particular constituencies: in theory, each deputy represents an anonymous six-hundredth of a nation which is one and indivisible. But it is precisely this extreme centralisation, and the suppression of all local and regional self-administration, self-determination, and self-help, which have left local interests no other outlet for their views than the national parliament, in which these narrow-minded interests constantly obscure and confuse the general problems of national policy, which it should be the province of parliament to consider and decide. When Paris, through its Prefects and Sub-Prefects, dominates the local politics of every provincial hamlet, what is there for the inhabitants of the hamlet to do but carry their local politics to Paris through the medium of their deputy? As a result, the parliament of the One and Indivisible Republic is transformed into a patchwork of six hundred local wrangles the moment the debate moves from the occasional noble flights of principle to the day-to-day business of economic, administrative, and financial problems.

The politics and legislation which emerge from this process have an incoherence which is not the outcome of conspiracy—not even by that mythical target of radical eloquence, the "two hundred families," who haunt the popular imagination as the ancestors of all evil. It follows automatically from the everchanging constellations, coalitions, and compromises of an inconsistent and myopic parochialism, which has allowed every problem of the French economy to be tackled only in the most short-sighted way, bit by bit, day by day, and case by case, and which has unfailingly taken the line of least resistance. It has defended all *situations acquises* against the alterations required by modern techniques; it has doled out state subsidies and state guarantees for every branch of industry whose routine is menaced; it has transferred deficits and surplus production to the public charge; and it has defended unyieldingly an archaic fiscal system, which for half the population has become a virtual freedom from taxation, at a corresponding oppression of the remaining half.

FROM these *quid pro quo* transactions no overall policy has ever emerged. Thanks to the importance, to the great majority of deputies, of the rural constituencies, "peasant interests"

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have always been sacred; the tax reliefs enjoyed by agriculture—like those of the liberal professions, from which the leading personalities of small town and countryside, of the political organisations, and the deputies themselves are recruited—have always remained inviolable; protection for agriculture and an ever-extending system of subsidies have hurried to the aid of even the most backward and unproductive undertakings. With all this electorally remunerative and economically ruinous quackery the Third Republic never developed or even visualised a consistent peasant policy, and calmly allowed the agriculture of half the country to decay, degenerate, and disintegrate. And it was just as lacking in foresight in its enthusiasms for social welfare. The famous policy of tenant protection, which in a thirty-year period resulted in the occupation, almost free of rent and secure from eviction, of flats and houses by a "sitting-tenant"; in the depreciation of French investments in real property; in an almost desperate homelessness of the new, "non-sitting" generation—this is a symbol of a whole mentality which openly protects special interests, while lacking totally any awareness of concomitants and consequences. The day-to-day work of parliament as a "Chamber of Interests" can be reduced to the simple, if slightly simplifying, formula: to approve expenditure and refuse taxation—a curious reversal of the origin and *raison d'être* of parliamentary institutions.

Parliamentary practice has adapted itself exactly to the limited sphere within which the administrative state allows freedom of action to succeeding governments: not the freedom to propose, much less enforce, a consistent policy, but the freedom to grant to their succeeding groups of supporters privileges, concessions, advancements, medal-ribbons, special consideration for their special concerns—in short, a few crumbs, large or small, from the table of the national economy. And since it actually is part of the cares and duties of the deputy for Creuse to wring from the budget of the Republic the appointment of a village game-keeper in Chénerailles-en-Combrailles, he has very little time left to examine more closely the complicated problems of overall policy: for this, he must be content with the allegorical treasure-chest of ideological certainties and historical tableaux. Let the experts worry about how it all ultimately hangs together! The average politician, whether of the "Right" or of the "Left" or, as seen at his most dazzling, of the "Centre" which flirts with both, has a capacity for advocating, alternately or simultaneously, the most contradictory opinions with equal fervour and with equal eloquence; and this capacity is matched only by the capacity of his audience to approve of either with an equally sincere enthusiasm.

After all, they say with a wink, we know what is what.

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Mary Rickwood

Mrs. Upjohn's Apples

STANDINGFORD had been a plain old village on an old road, but some time before it had begun to grow, like the old hawthorn root in the churchyard, that had groped with its thin, black fingers towards the light, until the heavy, square, stone vault from whose corner it sprang was beginning to tilt like an empty floating box.

Two new factories had come to Standingford, and little red houses had pushed their way through the fields and orchards, low to the ground, like sheep set to keep down the grasses.

When Mr. and Mrs. Upjohn left their cottage in the High Street for one of the small red houses, no one supposed that they had done so out of any wish to join the newcomers in the fresh circles widening on the surface of Standingford. It was, instead, properly recognised by those who had known the Upjohns for many years that nothing could be better than to be able now to live so much nearer to their small orchard, which produced from its rich heart the great wine-bright apples for which Mrs. Upjohn was famous. Long before the single file of red houses stood up at the cross-roads, the corner had been known as "up by Upjohn's apples."

What pride Mrs. Upjohn may have felt in this public use of her name she showed neither to her old neighbours nor to her new, as she and her husband were a silent couple, as Standingford saw them, with little conversation for each other, and less for other people. In the evenings, silvered or moonless, with froth of blossom or snow, they would walk, arm in arm, at a steady, rolling pace, round the lanes and orchards of Standingford, nodding with a solemn and silent affability to those who met them, like two trees on the march.

The orchard had belonged to Mr. Upjohn's family since his grandfather's time, but it was as a wedding gift to Mrs. Upjohn that its true riches had become known. No one had ever had apples like hers from it. There were those who went so far as to hint that she had married the orchard rather than Tom Upjohn. When the neighbours met to drink the health of a new baby in the village, Mr. Upjohn never failed to drop his sixpence into the tankard for it, and it had been remarked more than once that Tom himself still got only the apple crop every year. But Mr. Upjohn had never sought sympathy from any of his neighbours, and the most suspicious of them ceased after a time to murmur on his behalf.

By day, Mr. Upjohn worked long hours on a farm some miles away, and Mrs. Upjohn spent some of her time in her small red house, but longer hours in her orchard, in absorbed and careful scrutiny, as some women will linger over arranging the flowers in the church, and creep back each day to admire what they have done. There was not one of her neighbours who would have been surprised to overhear Mrs. Upjohn in her orchard, going from tree to tree with her heavy tread, planting her large fists on her hips, and expostulating with every wrinkled leaf or torn twig. "This won't do at all," she would say, sadly. "You have disappointed me. Oh dear, I didn't expect you to be as stubborn as this. . . ." Or, after waving

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a large hand in greeting and praise to the richest of her trees, she would wheel round suddenly to another, with a sharp, peremptory change in her voice. "And don't you think you can sit there doing nothing. I know you. You didn't really try last year either." She would take the windfalls into her hands, and shake her head over them. "A pity about you," she would say.

She would attribute what seemed to her to be failures to many subtle and pitiable motives, and speak a kindly and encouraging word to yet another small and labouring tree, always, in the last resort, forgiving, and urging them all towards their full, fair fruit. The whole orchard stirred with deep and living effort.

EVEN in her small garden, and about her house, Mrs. Upjohn was busy at all times, and it came as a surprise to her old neighbours when it was known that she was to have in her home a young secretary who was coming to work in the factory offices. But it was remembered that when Mrs. Upjohn's apples were ready, she kept very few for her own eating, and it could be easily guessed, though no one knew her well, that her silence was kindly, even if it seemed that the girl might have a dull life until she made her own friends.

It was a slow, fat afternoon of late summer when Constance arrived. She was seventeen, and the bus which had left her half an hour before in the High Street had been a boat landing her on the shores of a mountainous island. She had never lived away from home before, and she had no doubt that the people she passed knew of the adventure upon which she had started, even as, at the same time, she would have preferred not to pass any people at all, so that she could enjoy the more terrifyingly her intrepid isolation.

Fruit was ripening in all the orchards of Standingford, blue plums fallen to the ground, apples alight on the trees, and long, brown pears hanging rough and fragrant as sunburnt skin.

"There's a smell of hot ferns," Constance thought, and when she looked up into the huge, sleeping, open sky, she walked lightly and carefully, as though afraid of wakening a giant. There was nothing that could be called a hill in Standingford, but Constance felt that she was climbing on, with her suitcase, to survey her island from the crest of Mrs. Upjohn's house.

As she rang the bell, Constance felt a quick annoyance with herself for having been so busy that she had now missed the pleasure of wondering what Mrs. Upjohn would be like. Like her own mother? Like a friendly native? Grim and awful? But Mrs. Upjohn smiled calmly when she opened the door, as though she had opened the door to Constance many times before, and had grown tired of doing it. "You've come," she said, simply, and Constance felt a quick irritation at her indifference, and instant hatred of the small brown hall in which they stood. She felt shut in a dark box, cut off from the huge sky of her island, and she was ready to burst into tears, or open the door and run away down the road.

But Mrs. Upjohn was already going up the stairs, carrying the suitcase, to take Constance to her room. It was a plain little room, smelling of hot, brown paint. A framed text hung on the wall, and with her eyes straining open to prevent her tears from falling, Constance stared at it.

"Come down when you're ready," Mrs. Upjohn said from the doorway in her flat voice. She and Constance smiled thinly at each other, and then Mrs. Upjohn went heavily down the stairs.

"If ye be willing and obedient," said the text, "ye shall eat the good of the land."

"Funny way of asking one to supper," Constance said to herself. She felt instantly happier, and fond of Mrs. Upjohn who had put the message there to cheer her up. Looking about her for the first time, she was pleased with her bed, too. It had a thin, artificial silk cover, pale blue, like a sheet of water, and when Constance flicked it back, one layer slid over the other with a thin, cold, whistling sound that made her shiver with pleasure.

As she went downstairs, she could hear Mrs. Upjohn talking, and the sound of her heavy steps going from room to room, but no answering voice. She felt puzzled, and finally stood hesitating at the foot of the stairs, in time to hear Mrs. Upjohn say, "Now *you* will

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be *her* chair. Don't tell me there's anything wrong with your leg. There isn't, so behave yourself." A chair was banged against the table. Then Mrs. Upjohn called out, "Are you boiling in there yet? Get on, then, quick as you can!" Constance was shaking with an agony of laughter. She could not be absolutely certain that all this could be only to cheer her up, but she was very disappointed, when she walked in to Mrs. Upjohn, to find her as solemn and silent as at first.

In a very few weeks, Constance had made friends at her office. When she was questioned about Mr. and Mrs. Upjohn, she would answer vaguely and coolly, but in secret she delighted in the house, now that she had discovered what she thought of as Mrs. Upjohn's game. A game to Constance was still a way of life, and she could recognise a good one when she saw it. There was not a doorknob, not a corner, not a dish, not a vegetable that was not in constant conversation with Mrs. Upjohn. Constance felt no doubt whatever that they replied. The house was filled with people and talk. She no longer felt any resentment that Mrs. Upjohn made only the barest attempts to talk to her. Their real conversation, Constance felt, was carried on in a quite different way. She felt sorry, sometimes, for Mr. Upjohn, and wondered if he shared in the game, or even if he knew at all how exciting Mrs. Upjohn's conversations made the house.

Constance noticed that sometimes he did not go out with Mrs. Upjohn in the evenings, but that, after she had gone, he would sit on the low wooden bench in the back garden, and stare solemnly up at the house or the sky. Sitting on her bed once, writing a letter to her mother, Constance could smell the smoke from his pipe, and if she leaned forward, she could just see the smoke balanced in the fading light. All the voices in the house were silent when Mrs. Upjohn was out, and Constance felt lonely. Mr. Upjohn seemed to her a sad and lonely figure in the garden, and she promptly leaned from her window and called down to him. "It's a lovely evening, Mr. Upjohn. . . ." But he answered her at once with such a cheerful "Yes, lovely," and with such a happy laugh, that Constance was reassured and felt that she had been mistaken about his being sad.

There were moments when Mrs. Upjohn seemed to Constance to carry "the game" too far. Once she bustled into the dining-room with a vegetable dish in her hands, and said outright to them both, "I've had great trouble with this drop of marrow, ever since it began to grow," and Constance felt her throat suddenly stiffen. "Cannibal!" she thought to herself. "Murdered after a great struggle." She swallowed hard and looked up to see Mr. Upjohn staring at her across the table, with a deep, fixed smile. He sat holding his knife and fork upright on the tips of their handles, pressing his wrists against the edge of the table, and Constance felt that at any moment he would burst into an outrageous laugh, like a giant about to eat her. What could there be to laugh about now, thought Constance irritably, staring down at her plate.

The weeks passed easily for Constance. Mrs. Upjohn was never angry, except once, when Constance was brushing her hair at her bedroom window, lazily watching Mrs. Upjohn hanging up the washing in the garden after lunch, a shirt for Mr. Upjohn, a blouse for Constance. "Mr. Upjohn is standing on his head," Constance thought idly, "and I'm hung up by my ears." Suddenly, the wind flung up the shirt's sleeves, with a lazy, clutching gesture, and the thin blouse spun round the rope like a top, entangling the leaping sleeves. Mrs. Upjohn rushed at them, crying fiercely, "No, no, you are not to do that!" and dragged them apart. Constance shuddered at the anger in her voice.

Mrs. Upjohn's apples were ready at last, and she had gone to bring in the first baskets herself. Constance was left sitting by the first fire of the autumn, with Mr. Upjohn. She leaned back in her chair, trying to light upon something in her thoughts that would give her pleasure. Everything seemed, for the moment, less exciting than it had been. She moved restlessly in her chair.

Then she looked up to find Mr. Upjohn standing silently at her side. Constance opened

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her mouth, first to speak, and then wider, in quick alarm. Mr. Upjohn bent savagely forward and kissed her open mouth. Constance felt she would choke. He seemed to be falling into her lap, suffocating her. As he bent again, she sprang sideways and out of the room, a thin, wailing cry bubbling from her mouth as she ran. At the top of the stairs, the house seemed as silent as though she were alone in it. No one was following.

Outside the window, Mrs. Upjohn, her arms hanging at her sides, a basket of apples in each hand, stood as motionless as a dead tree. She moved away past the side of the house, and went in at the back door, with heavy, plodding steps.

Constance sat on her bed, shivering. She felt sick, and suddenly tired. "Beastly old man—I didn't like it," she said with tearful anger. She began to cry, and then jumped to her feet in terror. From downstairs burst out a wild, savage, thudding noise—no voices, only an intense, irregular beating on walls and doors. Constance felt a rope of terror round her throat. She crept out on to the landing, and downstairs.

The wild beating grew louder. There now seemed to be distinguishable the separate thud of trampling feet. Outside the kitchen door she paused, trembling. As she opened it, she could just hear, above the noise, the voice of Mrs. Upjohn, hardly recognisable, thin, hoarse, filled with hatred and reproach, saying, "O you apples, you apples, how could you keep me so long away?"

The air was heavy with the smell of apples. The wrecked room was littered with them. Constance stood there stupefied. Mrs. Upjohn had not seen her, and after a second she fled suddenly, in panic, back to her room.

W. S. Merwin

The Bathers

They make in the twining tide the motions of birds.
Such are the cries, also, they exchange
In their nakedness that is soft as a bird's
Held in the hand, and as fragile and strange.

And the blue mirror entertains them till they take
The sea for another bird: the crumbling
Hush-hush where the gentlest of waves break
About their voices would be his bright feathers blowing.

Only the dull shore refrains. But from this patient
Bird each, in the plumage of his choice,
Might learn the deep shapes and secret of flight

And the shore be merely a perch to which they might
Return. And the mirror turns serpent
And their only sun is swallowed up like a voice.

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Edwin Muir

Dresden, Hellerau, and Vienna —A Memoir

THE modern world was set going when we began to make nature serve us, hoping that we should eventually reach a stage where we would not have to adapt ourselves at all: machinery would save the trouble. We did not foresee that the machinery would grow into a great impersonal power, that we should have to serve it instead of co-operating with nature as our fathers did, and that as it grew more perfect we should become more powerless and be forced into a position we did not choose, or chose in blindness before we knew where our desires were leading. The generation to which I belong has survived an age, and the part of our life which is still immobilised there is like a sentence broken off before it could be completed; the future in which it would have written its last word was snatched away and a raw new present abruptly substituted; and that present is reluctant now to formulate its own sentence, from the fear that what it has to say will be cut short by yet another raw present. I can see myself walking about in that first age and in the one which succeeded it, and I can measure the difference between them; I can feel also the doubt which the present casts upon the past, suggesting that what once appeared innocent—a harmless excess of liberty, perhaps, a naïve trustfulness—may have been the stuff which a Hitler or a Stalin would later seize upon for his ends. The process which produced this universal effect seems, looking back, both blundering and inevitable: good and evil, our hopes and our fears, our dreams and our sober calculations equally helped it on; as if nothing we could have done could have prevented us from reaching the exact point where we are now. Yet this feeling of inevitability, if we were to submit to it, would make our life perfectly empty; we should become conscious ciphers in a historical process whose intentions are not ours but its own; and our thoughts, our affections, our most intimate selves, would be mere illusions to amuse or distract us.

I do not believe in the inevitable and the impersonal, these twins which always go together; yet they have come so powerfully into our lives that we have to make a conscious effort now to resist them. This was not so forty or fifty years ago; then there was no preoccupation with the inevitable or its corollary the unitary world; this has sprung up since, enfeebling our individual power to live. It has made easier the growth of creeds which deny the significance of life: the creed of pure power which Spengler expressed when he said that "Man is a *beast of prey*; I shall never tire of saying that": the creed of power directed towards an end in the future, which was formulated by Marx: creeds later to be put in practice by Hitler and Stalin. According to them, everything is inevitable, yet one is still

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free, it seems, to choose inevitability. Those who reject it stand outside, insecure, delivered to the mercies of freedom and chance, with only their lives intact.

This terrible impersonality is the mark of the last twenty or thirty years, and it is sometimes justified by the inevitability of the historical process. Yet it diffuses itself even without that support, for it has the prestige of established things; we can be appalled but we cannot any longer be surprised by it; we accept it as a fact, even if we accept it in no other sense.

AWARENESS of the direction in which the world was moving, which came to me so belatedly, casts doubt on my memory of those years in the early 1920's when my wife and I lived in Dresden and Hellerau. Yet they still seem to me among the happiest of my life. We lived by ourselves in a town pleasantly strange. Everything seemed good—the houses, the streets, the people—because we were disposed to find them so. The Saxons are not a handsome race, but I was not looking for beauty, and when I encountered it there in some chance face it was so unusual that it surprised me and awoke a sense almost of alarm. There was so much of life that I had not accepted and felt the need to accept, that what I wanted now was the ordinary, as the reassuring, given substance of life—round faces and blank blue eyes and comfortable bodies—and here they were in plenty, more consoling than any more carefully finished sketch of the human form could have been. These people in the streets were like a race still in the making, and quite content to be so, affirming without knowing it that the material out of which mankind is shaped has a simple natural virtue. When we went out for our midday meal at some nearby restaurant and saw Saxons converging upon it with greetings of "*Guten Appetit*" or "*Mahlzeit*," the simplicity of that salutation, that blessing on the stomach and its doings, though the mere observation of a convention, moved us genuinely. It confirmed and blessed the rite of eating.

In Dresden we lived in an agreeable, silent vacuum, except for the talk of our garrulous landlady Frau Mütze, who was always asking us to get a nice English husband for her pretty daughter. Now and then we met John Holms and his wife, who had turned up shortly after our arrival. We lodged on the top floor of a large insurance building in the Old Town, and looked down on a square and beyond it, through a fringe of trees, at the Elbe. Except for the time I spent in writing my articles for the American *Freeman*, on which we lived, we had our days to ourselves. We employed them in learning German and reading German poetry, and seeing the sights, and visiting cabarets, and attending concerts with the Holmses. The Germans whom we met were friendly, perhaps all the more so because they could practise their English, after long disuse, on us as accommodating patients. They did not show any bitterness at the defeat of their country, or any envy at our good fortune in being on the winning side. All this seemed now in a sense pointless, and it was assumed that they and we were above such considerations. I think that at that time the Germans sincerely wished to be reconciled with the world.

The Dresden we knew then, that spacious, handsome city, has since been destroyed in a war of which we never dreamt. Hitler was already collecting a small group around him in Munich, but in Dresden and Hellerau we never heard his name or knew that he existed. We knew nothing either, after living some months in the town, of the many families ruined by the war and the inflation: old people whose life-savings had disappeared as through a hole in a sack; comfortable families reduced to bewildered poverty. We became aware of these things only a year or so after we went to Hellerau. There, as we came to know almost everyone in the little community, we realised the difficulty they had in dealing with each day as it rose. But Dresden looked ambiguously prosperous; the people were well dressed, the shops well stocked, the places of entertainment filled: not a sign of ruin hiding in its respectable burrows.

We lived there in ignorance, not looking ahead. In spring we watched the sweet-smelling lime blossom coming out on the trees bordering the street, and in summer spent a great deal of time on the banks of the river, sun-bathing

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among the seal-like Saxons whose skins were tanned to a Red Indian brown: a pleasant, vacant life without a trace of boredom, for everything round us was strange. My wife began a play, and I attempted one or two poems, with indifferent success. Holms tried to make up his mind whether Wagner compared with Beethoven could be called a great man, and whether love satisfied or love unfulfilled was the better inspiration for the artist, Wagner standing for the first and Beethoven for the second. He spoke of a long poem he had in mind on the metamorphoses of the animals, in which the various species would be shown emerging pictorially in the course of a long magical process, by an enormous speeding up and simplification of time. But the lethargy which weighed upon him did not lift long enough for him even to start. To begin, to find a fulcrum for the lever which would raise him to the point he would be at, was the problem that he was never able to solve.

ONE autumn evening, as we were waiting at a tram stop, we ran into A. S. Neill, who was an old friend of my wife. He told us that he had started an international school at Hellerau and begged her to come out there and help him. After thinking it over for a few days she agreed, and a fortnight later we moved to the house of Frau Doktor Neustätter, five minutes' walk from the school. She was an Australian married to a Bavarian doctor who worked in the Ministry of Health in Dresden. She helped Neill with his work.

The people we knew in Hellerau made up a small community gathered round an eurhythmic school which Jacques Dalcroze had built there and had forsaken after the war. It was a spacious building, with a theatre and lecture rooms and dancing halls and tennis courts. The central part was now used as a school of dancing, one of the wings housed Neill's international school, and the other a school for the Hellerau children. We all had our midday meal each day in the Schulheim. The dancing students, mostly young women, were drawn from most of the countries in Europe; the common language was German. My wife taught in Neill's school every morning. The students were often in Frau Neustätter's hospitable house in the evenings, and we came to know them all.

All this was thirty years ago, and with one half of my mind I can look at it historically, while the other half still sees it as I saw it then, wrapped in its own illusions. We lived, it seems to me now, in a climate of "new ideas," and looked forward to a "new life" which would be brought about by the simple exercise of freedom, a freedom such as had never been formulated before in any terms, since it too was new. We were, or thought we were, without "prejudices." We "accepted" everything, no matter what it might be. We were interested in psychoanalysis not as a scientific method, but as a magical process which would deliver us from our inhibitions and leave us with a freedom all the dearer because it was beyond our imagining. We did not know that the climate in which we lived was already growing colder, or if we did we took care to keep it at a level of liberal warmth. While the inflation was spreading around us like a dry rot, we thought only of a potentiality which would, almost without our lifting a finger, painlessly realise itself and deposit us in a new existence. Our desire for that new state, which was so clearly good since it was all freedom, seemed to give us a foretaste of it. To dream, and to dream "scientifically," of such things as techniques triumphantly employed, prejudices dispelled, complexes dissolved, was to us a sort of activity which could achieve its end only by a wise suspension of effort. A life without an obstacle, activity without endeavour, desires which would spontaneously exhale into universal freedom: that was our dream. Actually our desires did not behave in this way, nor indeed, with the sensible part of our minds, did we expect them; in our conduct we observed the usual conventions without noticing it, and were annoyed when anyone violated them, for it caused, to our surprise, all sorts of inconvenience. We felt free without practising freedom; we merely talked; and to talk freely gives an illusion of freedom hardly to be distinguished, except by an intellectual effort, from the reality. We discussed everything.

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How much I was immersed in that atmosphere I cannot say, perhaps more than I realised. Reading some of my articles for *The Freeman* written about that time, I see that I was very little concerned with the truth of what I said; I was simply letting my mind range freely among "ideas," as if that were a sufficient end in itself. I had started the habit in Glasgow, where ideas were so scarce that any, good or bad, were a treasure to be prized. I had afterwards come under the influence of Orage, the most intelligent merchant of ideas of his time. But in Hellerau my imagination was beginning to waken after a long sleep, and the perceptions it promised were so much more real than those with which I had been trifling, that these no longer excited me. Some of them vanished altogether and were as if they had never been; others transmuted themselves into imaginative forms, particularly those which touched the ideas of innocence and reconciliation: Eden and the millennial vision of which I had dreamt as a child. The atmosphere in which our little community lived, with its affirmation of a freedom of mere wish and thought, had indeed in it something which faintly evoked the image of Eden and the prophecy of the time when the lion would lie down with the lamb: a nonsensical Eden, no doubt, and a sentimental lion and lamb, but touching as things genuinely felt. My image of Eden was associated with these naturally good and charming people, and the perfect innocence with which they used their supposed freedom. They have been scattered long since to their own countries or exiled to others; they have grown into the real world, and the life they lived in Hellerau, which they could not have continued to live in any case after a certain age, has quite disappeared from the world. Some of them probably died in the gas chambers, and among them one or two who had such a genius for happiness that I still cannot imagine them as being anything but happy.

This provincial dream was fostered by its surroundings. Hellerau—I had better speak of it in the past tense, for the war may have destroyed it as it has destroyed Dresden—was a little garden city, the first of its kind, and the model, I believe, of the English ones. It had been originally intended for craftsmen, and was pleasantly secluded among sweet-brier hedges and in the midst of pine woods. The small population when we went there were no longer chiefly craftsmen; government officials from Dresden and faddists of all kinds had settled in it. But all of them had acquired a distinct character which would not have been found in any other small German town: a certain amenity and mazed tolerance. They met in the evenings at a little tavern on the edge of a pine wood to drink and converse or, in summer, to dance outside in the courtyard.

In other parts of Germany, particularly in the large cities, the freedom we amateurishly cultivated had been pushed far beyond any bounds we could imagine. It was the age of Expressionism and the New Objectivity. The Expressionists carried freedom to a point where it lost all meaning and became an elaborate torment. They were driven by a need to pour out the last dirty dregs of the mind, as if it were a duty to appal themselves and their readers; one could hear in their works the last hysterical retchings, perhaps the death-rattle of freedom. The New Objectivity set out to describe things as they were, and it too was involved in the nightmare, for the state of the large cities was as horrible as the visions of the Expressionists. But in Hellerau we did not know of that terrible and apparently real freedom which assumed that since everything was possible everything was allowable; and we could continue our dream.

The German landscape, as I have said, helped to foster it. There was something in the appearance of the woods which seemed to invite nature-worship, and from nature-worship to worship of our own nature, which we were modestly practising, was an easy step. The trees solicited us to be natural, since they were natural; to be young, since they renewed their youth every year; to be child-like, since we could easily feel as we wandered among them that we were children of nature. The German poetry we read added to this mild enchantment. The poems of childhood in particular, so numerous and so unlike those of Vaughan

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and Traherne—poems of natural not of heavenly innocence—softly persuaded us that it was sweet not to grow up.

What I am trying to describe is an enchantment. It was so strong that it could transmute and use for its ends the most recalcitrant material, such as the ideas of Freud. The child of nature, the companion of the woods and streams, would enter into a still more perfect communion with them when he had resolved his complexes.

The worship of nature was a powerful cult in Germany in these years after the war. There were a few nature- and self-worshippers in Hellerau: I remember a thin dusky man who always seemed to be working in his garden, clad in nothing but a loin-cloth, eye-glasses and a wrist-watch, and always with the serious air of one making an important, if misunderstood, demonstration. The self-worship took more elaborate forms. As I sat one evening in Frau Neustätter's garden I saw a tall handsome man in flowing robes, a fillet round his head, passing majestically with a beautiful subservient young woman on either side. I never saw him again, and hardly know whether he was a visiting prophet or an apparition. But in the week-ends the simple-lifers, the direct worshippers of nature, came out from Dresden and crowded in the woods. They called themselves the *Wandervögel*; they neither smoked nor drank; instead they carried guitars, and sang German songs, and kindled ritual fires, and slept, young men and women together, in the woods. The war had made them poor and wakened in them a need to be with harmless unwarlike things like trees and streams, and to move freely through peaceful spaces. Most of them, I have been told, were carried away later by the gospel of Hitler. They had nothing but simplicity and a belief that smoking and drinking were evil to protect them against him.

There were, outside the Schulheim, some people with a different philosophy of life. I met one day a stiffly polite, stiffly superior, apparently rich young man who had just returned from a visit to the circle in which Stefan George, the poet, passed his life. He told me that George was the only hope for Germany, and that I should not be distracted by the simple antics of the *Wandervögel*. (The *Wandervögel* eventually turned out to be more powerful than the poet.) I had not read George at that time and did not know that he was a great poet in spite of his curious ideas. On the young man's advice I bought a book on him by Gundolf, a member of the circle, and was repelled by its mixture of superciliousness and reverence, in which the reverence was so plainly based on the superciliousness. George was a man of proud spirit, with a devotion to the art of poetry unique in Germany in his time; but he could follow it only in seclusion, and he had been imprisoned for a long time within the circle he had summoned to guard him: it cut him off from life. When he escaped from it into his earlier memories he could still be a great poet; as it was he went on shaping himself in his self-imposed privacy until he became incapable of shaping experience. It was greatly to his honour that, when the Nazis began to court him as one who had also dreamt a dream of a Third Empire, he would have nothing to do with them. He went into exile and before his death gave orders that he should be buried with his face turned away from Germany. I mention him because at the time he had power over a small but influential group of intellectuals.

In a sort of friendly detachment there lived in Hellerau an impoverished Junker, Ivo von Lucken. He had lost all he had in the inflation and lived in a little basement room in the Schulheim which he never let anyone enter, I think because of its extreme bareness. He gave lessons in Spanish and was paid by his students, at his own request, in parcels of food, pounds of rice, pats of butter. He was a high-nosed, hawk-faced man of an extraordinary sweetness and courtesy, so innocently simple that he would tell the most embarrassingly absurd stories against himself; most of them were about his time in the army during the war, when he never seemed to have carried out an order rightly, or managed to make his uniform fit him. As he spoke of these things a look of surprise would settle on his face, for he could never account for the strange difficulties that beset him during that time. He was interested

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in poetry and goodness, not at all in politics. He knew most of the living German poets and had himself written poetry of which nobody seems to have taken any notice. But that did not in the least disturb him; his devotion to the poetry of others was too great, and his own vanity too small. Although he had lost all his money and lived in great poverty, I never heard him make any complaint. He was tubercular, and his lodgings in the basement must have been very bad for his health; but to him this predicament was simply a fact to be adapted to his style of life—a style created out of a complete lack of pettiness and a refusal to recognise the existence of time. My wife and I often tried to wile him to have a meal with us, but he would never admit to himself that he had any need of one, and only once or twice did he consent, with an air of elaborate carelessness, and then, as a point of private honour, would eat very little. He had one desire, which he often came back to, though with the detachment of one speaking of a dream: he wanted to go to Spain. It is unlikely that he ever had his wish. When I think of all the people I knew in Hellerau, I feel that he for one could never have gone across to the Nazis: his innocence would have saved him. Indeed he lived with Hölderlin more than with any living man, and he was more pleased when he succeeded in making me begin to understand that great poet than when he got a parcel of food from his students. I cannot remember that he had any "views"; I think he had only devotions. Of all the people in Hellerau he was the poorest, but also possibly the happiest.

I have often wondered how many of the people I knew then, and which among them, went over to the Nazis ten years later when Hitler came to power. I know of two who stood out: one, a Gentile, was shot by the Nazis; the other, a Jew, was shot a decade later by the Russians when they occupied Dresden.

We left Hellerau in 1923, when the inflation was making life intolerable and the guilt of appearing responsible for it, however indirectly, was more than we could face. I remember the days of mourning, mourning rather than bitterness, when news came that the French had sent "black" troops into the Ruhr. The mourning in a little turned sour as the inflation made life impossible. A year or so after we left, when a Communist majority came to power in Saxony, Neill had to give up his school and move what was left of it to Austria. By then people had become so desperate that they were willing to listen to Hitler or Thaelmann or anybody. We tried to salve our consciences in the last few months by taking our German friends in relays to Dresden for a good meal. But we felt at last that we had no right to be in the country.

It was late autumn when we arrived in Salzburg, but the days were still mild though the leaves had turned. We got lodgings with a woman who pestered us with her inquisitiveness and was never able to understand why we had come to live in Salzburg. I think she suspected, all the time we were there, that we were not really married, though she never dared to broach the subject. She had a son who appeared at intervals making a great outcry and asking for money to extricate him from his latest scrape; he was a mixture of boisterous good spirits, cunning and malice more commonly to be found in Germany than in Austria. His visits always left his mother in a state of apprehension: what would he be at next? We could not tell.

In that lovely provincial town we became acquainted with a thing which was to cause the extermination of five million people twenty years later. In a café we came across a little local paper called *Der Eiserne Besen*, the Iron Broom. It contained nothing but libellous charges against local Jews, set down with great rancour. We read with astonishment of ritual murders still happening, and of curious Jewish perversions, described in detail, of which we had never heard. A little time afterwards we met some intelligent Austrians who maintained against all we could say that Ramsay Macdonald and Bernard Shaw were Jews: they must be, for they were subverters of society. And in a bookshop where I went one day to buy the poems of Walther von der Vogelweide, the proprietor, who was embarrassingly

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grateful for my interest in German poetry, became rude when I asked him for the poems of Hugo von Hofmannsthal; he said roughly that he did not stock them. I could not understand his sudden incivility, and only after I had left did I begin to realise that he must have thought it presumptuous for any Jew, or anyone partly Jewish, like Hofmannsthal, to write in German. We had known that there was a Jewish problem, for we took the newspapers, but we still thought of the Jews mainly as people we had read about in the Old Testament. Our landlady's son would have laughed heartily over the stories in *Der Eiserne Besen*.

In December, with the snow deep on the ground, we decided to go to Vienna, which promised a spacious area of dryness and warmth scooped out from the cold white landscape. My wife had written to Neill, who had now taken his school to the top of an Austrian mountain, asking him for the address of a hotel in Vienna where we could put up while we looked round for private lodgings. He recommended a place which he said was clean and reasonably cheap. When we came down on the first evening for dinner we noticed that there were a great number of Jewish people at the tables and decided that there must be many Jews in Vienna. Next morning, a Saturday, we rose late for breakfast and sitting in a little enclosed veranda looked out on the street. The shops were all shut; the street was very quiet; the windows in the drab line of houses showed no faces behind them; little groups stood at the street corners in peaceful conversation; and we realised that they were all Jews. The scene was curiously foreign, indeed more strange than any other we had looked upon in our travels. We had never seen so many Jews together at one time; they had always been thinly scattered among a Gentile crowd; and the fact that they now seemed so foreign made us dimly understand the half-superstitious feeling which produces anti-Semitism. Only after a while did we realise that this was the Jewish Sabbath and that it was not desertion but peace that lay on the street. But the feeling of strangeness remained; the little groups were like crowds distributed for effect on a stage; perhaps the fact that we were sitting in the enclosed veranda as in a box in a theatre, looking out through glass at the prearranged spectacle, added to the effect of distance and unreality. Among the groups were old men with long ritual curls and dressed in caftans. But the strangeness was not merely in the clothes. It took us a little longer to realise that we were in the Jewish quarter.

We stayed in the hotel for a few days. The Danube canal separates the Jewish quarter from the main town and to leave it you have to cross a little bridge. Walking either way we met nothing but Jews and were conscious how cut off was the life of that populous but restricted quarter and how different from that of the rest of Vienna. This segregation seemed a palpable embodiment of anti-Semitism, but during our few months in Vienna we found many spoken evidences of it as well, in conversations with people good and bad, intelligent and stupid. The good and the intelligent were, if anything, the more trying, for they advanced humanity and reason in support of their prejudices. But the distaste of the well-bred whenever a Jew was mentioned was worst of all.

We were without knowledge of Jewry and felt at a loss when involved in anti-Semitic discussions. These puzzled us even more than the arguments advanced, which seemed to us childish; the discussion itself was the greater and the less understandable offence. At times we had to listen in patience, for some of the anti-Semites were intelligent people. Yet at a moment's notice they would tell us seriously of hosts of Galician Jews who had come to Vienna without a penny and now owned fine properties and drove about in stylish cars: all by speculating on the exchange. These stories were as legendary as the tales of ritual murder in *Der Eiserne Besen*. Many Viennese families had seen their money vanishing in the inflation; someone may have heard of a Jew from Galicia who had made money on the exchange; in a little he became an invading host of Jews. The misery in Vienna created its own nightmare. We did not know that the nightmare would end in the slaughter of a people.

The misery was more public than it had been in Dresden, for things had grown generally worse in Central Europe since we left that city. One bright winter day my wife and I were

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walking along the Ring when we saw a man half-sitting, half-lying on the wet pavement with his back against the wall of a great block of offices. He trembled continually and mumbled to himself. People kept passing; some of them threw him a worried glance, but no one stopped; they had no doubt got used to such sights. We waited beside the man and managed to learn from him that he was on his way home from a hospital where he had been treated for a wound in the head, an old war wound. He had walked for a long time till he could go no farther; he was still far from his home, and he had no money to pay his tram-fare. We stopped a taxi, helped him in, found out his address, and gave him some money. He made no response but kept muttering, "My head! My head!" We saw how much Vienna had suffered when a people naturally kind could pass with indifference someone in such distress.

Yet in spite of their poverty the Viennese people kept up, as a sort of needy caricature of itself, their tradition of gaiety. There was a story going round at the time that while in Berlin people were saying, "The position is serious but not critical," the Viennese version was, "The position is critical but not serious." The people of Vienna were proud of this story against—or was it for?—themselves; it expressed their characteristic way of life, which had always been precarious in appearance and yet had worked for two hundred years; and it defined the Austrian brand of courage, which consists in recognising that things are naturally incorrigible, yet are to be got round by tradition, tact, tolerance, and a sense of honour. The old Austria was gone, dismembered by the Versailles Treaty; Vienna, the great capital, was now the chief town in a small country. The Viennese went on in their traditional way on their shrunken means, and still kept up a style, embodied in their faces, their elaborate and yet natural manners, and their public jokes, though now there was nothing except a memory on which to support it.

About our Authors

Arthur Koestler's essay on "Attila, the Poet" will be included in the second volume of his autobiography, *The Invisible Writing*, to be published shortly by Hamish Hamilton and Collins. Mr. Koestler is also collaborating with George Mikes in the preparation of a volume devoted to Attila Jozsef, which will include a representative selection of his poetic work, to be published by Andre Deutsch at the end of the year. . . . Kenneth Tynan will assume the post of dramatic critic of *The Observer* later this summer. . . . Nathan Glazer, whose first report on "What People Think" appeared in our October issue, is associated with the publishing firm of Doubleday & Co. in New York. He is co-author, with David Riesman and Reuel Denney, of *The Lonely Crowd*, which has become in the few years since its publication a classic study in American social psychology. . . . Mary Rickwood is the winner of the recent *Sunday Times* short-story competition. . . . Stuart Hampshire is a Fellow of New College, Oxford, and a lecturer in Philosophy. . . . Paul Parisot is on the staff of *Combat* in Paris. . . . Christopher Morris is a lecturer in History at Cambridge. . . . Daphne Whittam is on the staff of *The Nation* in Rangoon. . . . Alan Clutton-Brock is a painter and an art critic. . . . D. J. Enright is now Professor of English Literature at Konan University in Japan.

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What People Think

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

THE current battle over American foreign policy has tempted several journalists to describe it as one in which

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

The best—those who refuse to consider either a "preventive war" or the appeasement of totalitarianism in Europe and Asia—still seem, surprisingly enough, to dominate American foreign policy. Point 4 is established and set up, the Marshall Plan is approved, the NATO treaty is ratified, the UN is supported financially and morally, wheat is sent to India, etc. But all this is done by a majority that acts as if it were a purely technical one. When the "internationalists" defeated the "nationalists" in the Republican national convention of 1952 —as they have done regularly since, in 1940, the issue first arose in its pre-war form of a fight between "isolationism" and "interventionism"—the victors hastened to mollify the defeated element. When the Republican "internationalists" formed their government last year, they filled important posts with representatives of the nationalist element. Even today, they barely dare to defend their position in Congress or the press.

What is the observer to conclude? It would seem that while the leaders of the two great parties, the administration, and the majority in Congress all support a reasonable and sensible foreign policy for America, very large sections of the people do not; and that, consequently, any demagogue can make such political headway by opposing the current policy that those who—out of an enlightened concern for the national interest—do support it must do their best to conceal this fact. For no one in Congress defends American foreign policy with the intensity with which Senator McCarthy attacks it; and it was left to Secretary of State Dulles, who does not have to worry about getting elected to his job, to answer Senator McCarthy's recent demand that America cut off all aid to its allies while any trade with China goes on.

Such is the solution, one supposes. But the supposition is wrong. For the conclusions that emerge from very many polls of American attitudes towards questions of foreign policy do not support any such analysis. The popular picture of the American people as a bellicose lot, barely held in check by its leaders and its European allies, finds no support in these polls. Large majorities have always been for a four-power meeting: 70 per cent in December 1951, 79 per cent in November 1953, and these majorities were given in answer to simple questions with no qualifications. Asia also concerns them less passionately than might be thought; last September the question was asked whether the United States should send troops to Indo-China: 85 per cent were against, 8 per cent for. Three months later, 56 per cent were opposed to having American troops re-enter the Korean war if it were started up again by South Korea. And by an overwhelming majority the American people answered "the Korean truce," when asked "what is the best thing Eisenhower has done in his first year in government?" Huge majorities are in favour of giving the President power to send food abroad to relieve shortages and famines; 30 per cent think the UN is doing a good job (as against only 12 per cent who think it is doing a poor job); a slender majority is in favour of sharing atomic secrets with England, Canada, and

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Australia (47 per cent yes, 42 per cent no). And finally, when, as reported by Elmo Roper in an article in the winter 1953–54 issue of *Public Opinion Quarterly*, a national cross-section was asked to choose among six approaches to the problem of achieving peace, only 9 per cent chose an out-and-out isolationist position—less than the number of those on the other extreme (11 per cent) who were in favour of transforming the United Nations into a World Government. A solid majority was in favour of working with the United Nations as it is now, or strengthening it—that is, they supported something more or less like current American foreign policy.

A number of important Americans comment in the same issue of *Public Opinion Quarterly* on Elmo Roper's article, and are surprised and gratified by his findings. But they are very perplexing findings. How, with this structure of opinion, can we interpret what is actually happening in America today? A not uncommon item in the American press these days will describe how a local veteran's post has protested the teaching of something called "world citizenship," or the use of UNESCO materials, in the local schools, and the result of such a protest is often a change in the curriculum and an apology by the school superintendent. There would seem to be no question who is on the offensive and who on the defensive in America. Yet the polls show that the isolationists are actually somewhat outnumbered by the supporters of world government. Why do we never read that local defenders of world government in some community have attacked the way the United Nations is being described to the schoolchildren, or have denounced an excessively chauvinistic treatment of some theme? Is it that the isolationists are filled with a "passionate intensity" while the internationalists "lack all conviction?"

The public opinions data at one's disposal do not suggest this at all. The isolationist element, it appears from the breakdowns given in the Roper article, are most numerous among the aged (those over 50) and the poorly educated (those who did not go beyond grammar school), among which groups we find that 13 per cent are isolationists, as against a national average of 9 per cent. The supporters of world government, conversely, enlist 15 per cent of those who have gone to college, and 13 per cent of the young (21–24) and middle-aged (40–49). Certainly the young and college educated are not notoriously less intense than the old and poorly educated. It is also interesting that a study by the Gallup poll of intensity of feeling towards Senator McCarthy (who, according to the poll, appeals to the same element that selects the isolationist alternative) revealed that those who opposed him—the professionals, the college educated, and the young—did so with much greater intensity of feeling than those who supported him. Assuming that Senator McCarthy will serve—as I think he does—roughly to divide the isolationists from the internationalists, it is clear that the isolationists, at least as far as this test goes, are *less* intense in their feelings than the internationalists. And this is understandable: they are not, so to speak, from the authoritative opinion-holding and opinion-forming elements of society—those with higher educations, and in occupations that carry some prestige.

WHY then, are the internationalists on the defensive? Do we deal with some widespread illusion on the part of politicians who, if they only dared defend their position more actively, would find an overwhelming support from the country?

I think most observers will agree that there is no illusion involved. The isolationists unquestionably have a certain kind of initiative, given them by the course of events during the last eight years. We have in America today one of those relatively rare situations in which the less educated and the powerless—that is to say, the isolationists—can accuse the educated and powerful—that is to say, the internationalists—of having been wrong; and the latter are too embarrassed by the truth in the charge to counter-attack with a force equal to that of their accusers or with the force that their predominant position in government and society gives them. What seems to have happened is that 75 per cent of society, including the larger part of the well-educated and well-born, is on the defensive before the attack of the 25 per cent, consisting largely of the poorly educated and the disadvantaged (though including, it must be admitted, a lot of new wealth, particularly some Texas oil millionaires, and led by capable politicians).

To explain just how this has come about, we must say a few words on the recent history of

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the opinions of these two groups—isolationists and internationalists—who are most easily distinguished from each other in the public opinion polls, as we have seen, by the amount of education they have had. The educated group has shown a great volatility in its opinions as compared with the uneducated, which on reflection is only natural. Since it reads more, listens to news broadcasts more, and in general is better acquainted with what is going on in the world, it will more often be forced to change its opinions. The change that is most relevant for our problem is in its attitudes towards Russia. During the last war and for a while immediately thereafter, this better educated group was much more favourably inclined to Russia than the poorer educated. To the former, following Roosevelt or Wallace or Wilkie or Dulles, it looked as if a bright new world were dawning, in which Russia would cooperate with the United States in policing the world and all would be well. To the less educated, barely influenced by the tides of opinion let loose by the Second World War, Russia was still the country of atheistic bolshevism, and that was that. Naturally, these differences were expressed in many ways: the educated wished to share atomic secrets with Russia (with proper international safeguards, of course) and wished to aid foreign countries regardless of their native politics—indeed, they rather preferred to help the socialist countries and, in the early days, the "People's Democracies." Some of them, we know, even went so far as to act secretly in Russia's interests. The less educated did not hear much about these goings-on at the time; they simply preserved their traditional distrust of foreigners, and their traditional preference for keeping everything at home and giving nothing away. (In the United States—and I am sure in most other countries—more of the educated than the uneducated agree with the sentiment, "You can generally trust people.")

Of course, Russia's behaviour after the war rapidly disabused the educated, and in line with their historic volatility of opinion, they soon became even more anti-Russian than the uneducated. (In August 1953, in answer to the question whether Russia was trying to become the world's ruling power or only trying to increase its strength for self-protection, 81 per cent of the college educated as against 70 per cent of those with an elementary school education asserted that Russia was trying to become the world's ruling power.) But their policy before the change had turned out to be disastrously wrong (whether any other policy would have been right is another question, and one which historians, not politicians or ordinary people, are interested in). In the meantime, starting in 1948, the news gradually came out that various internationalists—of good schools, many of good families, and all filling the uneducated man's stereotype of the kind of person who wants to give the country away—really *had*, to the best of their ability, been giving the country away to the Russians.

Since the policy which had provided protective colouration for these activities—and certainly the notion of assuaging Russian suspicions with money and kindness provided wonderful cover for Harry Dexter White's proposals to give them tens of billions of dollars—had been a policy of almost the entire educated class, it was inevitable that those who, after 1947, would lead the new policy would be more or less the same people, or the same kind of people as had led the old. The isolationists were simply too weak, and lacked the personnel to take over, and they lost in their last big effort at the Republican Convention in 1952. The John Foster Dulles who selected Alger Hiss to head an organisation for international peace is the same John Foster Dulles who now leads the State Department. Consequently those who conduct the present policy of the United States, with the support, as we have seen, of a solid majority of the people, are at a rhetorical disadvantage in dealing with the old isolationists and current nationalists. They are in the position of the businessman who has been carrying on with his secretary and is found out by his wife. Now it is perfectly true that the husband is quite reformed, has a completely different secretary, and is sticking to business; but his wife keeps on shrieking that he is really betraying her and makes the impossible demand that he stay home altogether. Well, he knows he has to go to work, and he has to have a secretary, but he really can't answer her unfounded suspicions with the forcefulness he might have mustered if his record were clear.

It is true that American policy has changed since 1947: but to the less educated and isolationists (I use the terms interchangeably,

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though of course many of the less educated are not isolationists, and many isolationists are highly educated) it looks pretty much the same. The new policy still seems to call for giving things away; and last July, while 82 per cent of the educated were in favour of giving the president authority to send food abroad, only 66 per cent of those with elementary school educations thought this was a good idea. The new policy still seems to call for sharing atomic secrets; and in November, while 51 per cent of the educated were in favour of sharing atomic secrets with England, Canada, and Australia, only 43 per cent of those with elementary school education were so inclined. The new policy calls for lower tariffs; and while 42 per cent of the college educated favour this, only 24 per cent of those with elementary school education do. The new policy, which from the point of the less educated led us into the unnecessary war in Korea, still seems to run the risk of more war, and the uneducated everywhere, for one reason or another, are always against war, even when the educated see good reasons for it. Thus, the elementary school group is more strongly against re-entering a Korean war started by Rhee than the college educated.

The less educated want to have as little to do with the rest of the world as possible: they are against trade with Russia, against allowing China to enter the UN, against sharing atomic secrets, and against fighting in Korea—regardless of how inconsistent these opinions may turn out to be. And the educated, the rulers of the country, have not as yet been able to show that their policy, which means heavy taxes, conscription, military service overseas, and perhaps war, is any better than the completely negative policy of the uneducated—or rather of those politicians who represent them. This is inevitable in the situation. Those who do something, who conduct a policy which requires choices, commitments, and sacrifices, are always open to the attack of those who have no policy, and are against sacrifices. That is the historic advantage of the opposition, and no one can deprive it of the pleasure of irresponsibility.

But then there is the obvious disadvantage of the opposition—that it is not in power. And nothing is surer in this uncertain world than that the old isolationist position, the nationalist position, whose principal leader is now Senator McCarthy, will remain in opposition. One party—the Democratic—is completely opposed to it. Split on many issues, the Democrats are united in support of the policies initiated by Truman and continued—in its essentials—by Eisenhower. The other party is today led by its internationalist wing, and while accidents of electoral geography serve to give its nationalist wing great strength in Congress, its presidential candidates have, since 1940, been internationalists.

In 1956 the next round in the battle will be conducted. Many things must change by then before those who wish to withdraw from the world can capture the great party in which they are so strong. In the meantime, it is a fact that the great body of the American people, despite the apparent strength of those who in the name of anti-Communism attack the complex foreign policy designed to combat Communism, support this policy. One-and-a-half of the two great parties stand behind it; in a democracy, that is about the best you can do.

Nathan Glazer

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Letters from Scandinavia
II. Sweden

LITTLE AMERICA, HALF ASLEEP

ALFRED NOBEL suffered from a guilt-complex because he feared that people might use his dynamite; the Swedish people suffer from a guilt-complex because they did not use it. They feel that their neutrality during the war was not only due to their wise and traditional policy coupled with good luck, but that it was partly bought by concessions. "Conditions during the war when Sweden, in the early stages, was forced to concede certain favours to the oppressors of Norway and Denmark resulted in some initial difficulties on the emotional side . . ."—so writes Dr. Lennart Hirschfeldt, Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs. Apart from Norway, the West has practically forgotten this old story; but Sweden cannot forget it. Sweden did not really go further than most other neutrals in order to preserve her neutrality—and did much less than some. But while almost all the others failed, and were attacked and occupied, Sweden succeeded in remaining neutral. For this, few people blame them; but they blame themselves.

The important thing in such cases is not whether you are guilty but whether you feel guilty. The Swedes are not guilty: but they feel it. This is especially so because, while the Norwegians were always looking to the west, towards England, the Swedes used to look to the south, towards Germany. Sweden's whole culture and literature received its main inspiration from Germany. The Swedes, in many respects, used to be more German than the Germans. In their schools, German used to be the first foreign language taught and English the second. This was reversed—according to some malicious people—immediately after the battle of El Alamein.

Now they look westward, too—but not to England. They look across the Atlantic, towards the United States. It is not surprising that this should be so. The Swedes are wonderful technicians, real sons of the machine age; they have a knack for grandiose organisation; they are more materialistic and success-minded than the other Scandinavian nations. Sweden is little America, half asleep.

THE Swedes are the problem-children of the north. They are prosperous, the luckiest among the Nordic nations—but not the happiest. "I don't like the Norwegians"—many Swedes will tell you—"because they come here, look up at the moon and remark: 'The moon is bigger and brighter in Norway.' " "I don't like the Swedes"—the Norwegians will tell you in turn—"because a Swede gets up in the morning, looks in the mirror, bows deeply to himself and says: 'Good morning, Mr. Councillor!' or whatever his full and proper title may be." Yes, the Swedes give everybody his full title—and everybody *has* a full title; at worst it's Mr. Clerk, Miss Secretary, or Mr. Roadsweeper. (The story is told that two Swedes met on a boat-trip but as strangers they refused to start a casual conversation, until one of them hit upon the happy idea that they might address each other as "Mr. Steamship-passenger.") They don't only say "Good day"—but say it two, three, or five times; they not only say "tack"—"thank you"—but utter it a dozen times in rapid succession. Whenever a taxi-driver starts shouting out "tack-tack-tack" like a clock gone crazy, you may rest assured that you have overtipped him in a foolish manner.

Every aspect of social life is organised and formalised down to the smallest detail. "When

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wine is served at a luncheon or a dinner party" —explains a little pamphlet entitled "How to Feel at Home in Sweden"—"the first toast is the host's toast of welcome to all the guests. You are supposed to toast the lady sitting at your right at least once. The glass is raised slightly from the table and on catching your partner's eye, smile, bow slightly to your lady, and then say *skål* (pronounced: scawl). Drink and salute with your glass again before putting it down. . . ." If you are invited for supper you are supposed to take flowers; you are not supposed to toast your host and hostess at all but you have to deliver a little speech of thanks before leaving and a few days later send a note, expressing your gratitude "for the last occasion." You do not address people in the second person but always in the third—as if they weren't present. "If Mr. Garage-hand thinks it right. . . ." And so on and so on.

Many Swedes explained to me that the reason for these rigid formalities is the simple fact that they are instinctively courteous. I believe the opposite to be true. They lack instinctive politeness and real consideration for each other and, accordingly, these formal rules had to be enforced. These formalities are the pillars and columns on which an impressive edifice of human contact is built. This edifice is elegant, spacious, and richly furnished but it lacks central heating.

SWEDEN is the classical home of isolationism. In Sweden every citizen is an island in himself. They are very decent, scrupulously honest, reliable and well-meaning, and if they give their word they keep it. But it is hard to get a word out of them. Before the war I was attracted by a Swedish girl and I had the impression that she did not mind my company either. We went out fairly often together but to my extremely entertaining observations she always replied "yes" or "no" and the subject was irretrievably closed. After each monosyllabic reply I racked my brain to find another subject for my discourse: "yes" or "no" on her part liquidated that subject, too, and soon I dried up. Then we sat in silence. It was not the silence of lovers who can express so much, ah so much, without words; it was the silence of lovers who could express so little, ah so little, even with words. The affair petered out in utter boredom. It did not break up with a bang, it vanished into thin air without a quarrel—because even a quarrel would have involved the use of words.

The reason for this attitude is, I believe, their riches. The Swedes—they themselves protest—are only the richest people in Scandinavia, but not really rich. They are a poor people, they maintain, and one should not forget—they add —that Stockholm is not Sweden. I grew tired of this kind of argument years ago. Too many times have I heard that London is not England, New York is not America, Paris is not France, and Stockholm is not Sweden. But take away London, New York, Paris, and Stockholm from these countries and see what is left. Sweden *is* a rich country, the fifth richest in the world and the Swedes have a rich-man complex. While the Norwegians and the Finns look back to nature with a nostalgic sigh, the Swedes look at Detroit, the skyscrapers and the chain stores, with longing. And as nature is nearer to Oslo and Helsinki than Detroit is to Stockholm, the Swedes have to make up for their imaginary shortcomings with a pose. This is why they have developed a superiority complex; this is why they are so anæmically urban in contrast with their neighbours' healthy rusticity. And this is why they are so stiff.

But all is not well with their dignity. A Norwegian will order a bottle of spirits with a grin; a Finn will drink a pint of rum for breakfast without even a grin—because what can be more natural than drinking rum for breakfast? When ordering some *schnapps*, the Swede will explain to the waitress: "I have a slight cold." Or, "In such hot weather this should be nice, you know."

As they are not really colder than any other people, they often feel bored in their own country. They do not escape, as a rule, to little huts in faraway valleys—they escape overseas. The Swedes spend 6·8 per cent of their income on foreign travel—the largest proportion in Europe. One frequently sees cheap trips advertised, even to Africa—and people go in large numbers. Their social life is planned in every detail. Unlike the Central Europeans they have no cafés for casual meetings and clubs are few and far between. They have, however, more cinemas *per capita* than any other country in the world. Their suicide-rate is also the highest, the main reason for suicide being—I believe—boredom.

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SWEDEN is one of the very few countries where the middle class still rules—both socially and politically. Even their Socialist Party is respectable, sedate, and non-Marxist. But the Swedish middle class lacks the unshakable feeling of security of the English aristocracy and upper classes, the rock-like, rustic strength of the Norwegian and Finnish peasants and fishermen, and the overwhelming vitality of the American industrialists. On the other hand, they can appreciate spiritual beauties and traditional æsthetic values more, perhaps, than any of us.

That is why Stockholm is one of the most charming and beautiful capitals of Europe and that is why the Swedes are one of the few—if not the only—nation who still regard building as one of the fine arts. The national romanticism of the early years of this century was followed by a neo-classic period and eventually—but not without a fight and not without producing some horrible specimens into the bargain—the Swedes succeeded in merging the traditional with the functional. In Sweden an architect is permitted to be an artist and express his personality in stone. Stockholm's justly famous Town Hall is not only unforgettably beautiful but it is also a portrait of Ragnar Östberg. It was the Dutch artists in the 17th century who discovered that not only saints and martyrs were worthy subjects for paintings but also jewellers, rich cattle-dealers, and needy beggars. It was the Swedes (though not alone) who discovered in the 19th century that not only cathedrals, royal palaces, and town halls but also ordinary dwellings for ordinary people were worthy subjects for the architect's inspiration. *Vackrare vardagsvara* ("More beautiful everyday things") was the slogan at the early years of this century, preceding the claim for "the century of the common man"—and proving, ultimately, just as baseless as the other—but a good slogan and a noble aim it was. There is more charm in Swedish architecture than one would suspect the Swedes to possess. They express themselves more freely and easily, and with much less inhibition, in stone and mortar than in words.

SWEDEN is a large country, the fourth largest in Europe. She is one and a half times larger than Great Britain and slightly larger than California. But she has only seven million inhabitants—that means a population of one-seventh of that of the United Kingdom, two-thirds of California's, but more than double that of Norway. Sweden is nearer to Russia than Norway but has no common frontier with her. In the days of the Thirty Years War, Sweden was a dreaded great power. Gustavus Adolphus, who was regarded as a new Protestant Messiah, terrorised Germany and threatened Austria. The Swedish Empire shone in dazzling glory for fifty years but then collapsed totally and finally. Charles XII tried to resurrect the old glory but failed; he succeeded, however, in fleeing to Turkey—not a neighbour of Sweden—where he was interned by the Sultan for years. No Swedish warrior of any standing has managed to do that since Charles' days. After Napoleon, Sweden retired from practising the art of war and lived in peace. Dreams of conquest have been abandoned for the sake of dreams of general welfare. A hundred years ago Stockholm was the dirtiest city in Europe, second only to Constantinople; today it is the cleanest.

Napoleon made many kings but only one royal house of his creation survives—the Swedish. The descendants of Karl XIV Johan, formerly Marshal—and before that Sergeant—Bernadotte, still rule the country. King Gustaf V died in 1950. Following a welcome habit of Scandinavian kings he reached a very old age (92) and played tennis—and good tennis at that—even in the ninth decade of his life. He was succeeded by his son, Gustaf VI Adolf. The new king was 68 years old when he ascended the throne—that is, if he had been a businessman or a professor, he would have passed retiring age. He chose the phrase "Duty Above Everything" for his royal motto and lives up to it. He is a serious man, conscientious, modest, and much loved. You may run into the King or Queen in Stockholm stores when they are doing some shopping.

Compromise is, in Sweden, more than the much vaunted virtue it is in England; it is a ubiquitous phenomenon. Their government is a coalition government; the people's will is a compromise between millionaires, farmers, and trade unionists. Their economy is a Keynesian compromise with a strong Swedish accent: control of investments is its means; full employment its aim—but they leave as large a scope to individual initiative as possible. Habit and convention are the real ruling powers. There are few places where people go round so much in

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a groove as in Sweden and certainly none where they like it so much. A Hungarian friend of mine—who lives in Sweden—told me how he once got a job in an engineering firm and after his appearance on the scene one of his colleagues in the office—a kind and jovial soul—grew grimmer and grimmer every day. After about ten days, he burst into the office one morning and told off my friend for not putting his coat on the same peg every day. Would my friend finally make up his mind—he asked him, literally trembling with excitement—whether to use a peg on the right, on the left, or in the middle, and having decided this in principle would he choose one single peg and stick to it? The problem was settled and a general sigh of relief went up in the office.

The Swedes have a saying, *En ann' är så god som en ann'*—"Everybody is as good as everybody else." This egalitarian conception is, of course, supported by the so-called lower classes and often expresses itself in sulky complacency. It is difficult to get waiters, maids, etc., and they will keep you waiting for no other reason than to prove that they are as good as you. (I personally accept the principle that they are better, but I want to be attended to in a restaurant.) Sweden is a happy country where the customer is never right. Most shops can get as many customers as they want—but shop assistants are scarce and difficult to find. There is no unemployment problem; on the contrary, they have the problem of the "Jumping Erics" instead: the problem of people who keep changing their jobs with miraculous frequency; who go out for lunch and never return because they have signed up with another firm in the meantime. The Swedes are not running after money, money is running after them. To make a big fortune today may be extremely difficult, to live comfortably is easy.

I have to say a few words in praise of Swedish common sense. Perhaps they are inclined to examine themselves with a touch of Strindbergian introspection, but they view *things* with admirable detachment and are able to discover connections which would escape less practical people. When I was in Sweden, there was a tropical heat-wave there. Stockholm's water consumption rose alarmingly and they had to find ways of keeping it down. Any other nation would have issued patriotic appeals to the population exhorting them to use less water, or else would have made it a criminal offence to have a bath. The Swedes simply increased the output of light music in their radio programmes in the early hours of the evening. They knew that light music was much more popular than scientific lectures and, if light music were played, it was a safe bet that people would prefer listening to having a bath or shower.

MODERN Sweden is famous for her good sportsmen—runners and football players, first of all—for her large export of world-famous female film-stars, for her alcohol laws, and for the Nobel prize.

The excellence of Swedish runners is easily explained. Each Stockholm tram and bus which passes the main post office carries a letter-box. It is fascinating to watch people running after buses and trams with a letter in their hands. As someone has remarked, posting a letter in Sweden may pass as a minor track event. This seemingly odd habit has certainly produced a generation of excellent long-distance runners.

The export of world-famous film-stars is a curious phenomenon. It must be remembered, however, that theatrical culture is very high in Sweden (as in Scandinavia, in general) and large cities without one, or indeed several, permanent theatres, like many in Britain or the United States, are simply unimaginable. Greta Garbo, originally Gustafson, was born in the southern part of Stockholm in a poor working-class quarter. (It is an interesting fact that in almost all great cities the east end is the Jewish quarter and the south the poor workers' quarter.) Her father worked in the sanitary department of the city and later became a taxi-owner. Greta Gustafson was the third child of the family—she had a brother and an elder sister—and, at one time, some well-to-do people offered to adopt her. The Gustafsons, however hard their lot was, refused. Greta, at an early age, was employed by a barber at Götgatan 75. Her duty was to soap the faces of those customers who wanted a shave. There are some barber shops in Stockholm where not only the soap-girls but all the barbers are women. This is just as pleasant as it is terrifying. At the age of fifteen, Greta changed her job and became a salesgirl at PUB, Stockholm's great department store in Kungsgatan. First

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she sold ready-made dresses for ladies but later was promoted to the millinery department. Eventually she became a model—a further step-up—and she received her first film-part in that capacity: she modelled some frocks in a commercial PUB film. She showed some signs of ability and appeared subsequently in various short films. In 1922 her performance in *Hobo Peter* made such a hit that she was given one of the leading parts in the film version of Selma Lagerlöf's *The Gösta Berling Saga*. As a film-actress she changed her name. There had been a time when her brother, too, wanted to become an actor and it was he who chose the name Garbo. Greta did not like the name but liked her brother, so she accepted it. In 1922 she entered the School of Dramatic Art and in 1925 was taken by Director Stiller to Berlin to play the lead in *Die Freudelose Strasse*. She got good reviews but created no sensation. Soon afterwards Stiller was offered a Hollywood contract and he made it a condition of acceptance that Greta Garbo was to go with him. The Hollywood people did not want Garbo but they wanted Stiller, so they swallowed Garbo with a sigh and the greatest film-actress of all times left her country of origin. It was Stiller who, in America, invented the dreamy vamp-style for Garbo.

Ingrid Bergman was also born in Stockholm. Her father was Justus Bergman, a painter. She comes from a middle-class family and her career was much plainer sailing than Garbo's. She entered the School of Dramatic Art in 1934. I visited this famous school. It is in the building of the National Theatre. The school has not changed much since Garbo's days, except that there is a new stage for the students in a room which used to be the theatre-bar—a bar where everything was served except alcohol. Swedish students are not very conscious of their famous predecessors but every year the school receives dozens of letters from would-be actors and actresses from America who desire to pass through the same school where Greta Garbo, Ingrid Bergman, and Mai Zetterling learned the trade. The American candidates have to be turned down because the school accepts Swedish nationals only. All candidates have to pass a stiff entrance examination and only a few are chosen. But once chosen, the three years' course is free of charge—the school is maintained by the state. I was told that of the three great Swedish film-stars only Mai Zetterling had shown, in her school-years, outstanding talent.

SWEDEN's alcohol laws are also famous and justly so. They are so odd that the foreigner first tries to persuade himself that they cannot be quite so senseless as they seem; after some investigation he will find that they are. They are the result of Swedish compromise between free alcohol consumption and prohibition on the one hand, and between bureaucracy and common sense on the other. Whenever bureaucracy clashes with common sense bureaucracy is an easy winner. The consumption of beer and wine is unrestricted but Swedish beer contains only 2·8 per cent alcohol and is the worst in the world. Foreign beer, imported into Sweden, must be specially brewed and specially spoilt. Spirits are rationed both in restaurants and for home consumption. A family gets 3 litres of spirits per month, while a single person's full ration is 2 litres. Some people marry early in order to get more, and women who are teetotallers are almost certain to get married to enthusiastic consumers of alcohol. But women get less alcohol than men because—it is officially stated—they need less. In return they have full franchise. Near the end of the month restaurants are full of gloomy and solitary males who have finished their rations at home and are now consuming their 1·5 decilitre (about one-third of a pint) in a restaurant. They would not bring their wives to share the drink because the latter always get less but often drink more. Large taxpayers get more than the average, so do many business executives who can prove that they have to entertain people a great deal. Special rations may be allotted for special occasions, such as weddings, silver and golden wedding anniversaries, and citizens' fortieth, fiftieth, sixtieth, seventy-fifth, and one hundredth birthdays. For special allocations, people have to apply in advance and in writing. No spirits may be served in the restaurants unless people eat something too—and just a roll will not do. Consequently quite a few people have three or four suppers a night. If alcohol is served at a place where any kind of performance is staged, the place is called a variety or music hall and special rules apply to it. In a restaurant music is permissible, and a member of the orchestra may sing if he feels like it; but he may not imitate a bird, even if he feels like it, because then the

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place becomes a music-hall. The system gives employment to alcohol spies who sit in restaurants and look out for whisky, gin, and *schnapps* being served in coffee-cups. There is also a flourishing trade in alcohol ration-books—one person I met showed me twenty.

The law is very severe on people who drive a car under the influence of drink. Drivers must submit to blood tests when asked by the police, even when they are not involved in any accident. If 0·8 per cent alcohol is found in the blood the driver is fined; if 1·5 per cent—which would be still regarded as a permissible percentage in many countries—is found, the driver is sent to prison for a month or more and his licence suspended. Alcohol-offenders are kept in special prisons and have to do farm-work. All the better-class restaurants—to save the trade—run a special service to drive drunken customers home.

There are, of course, various explanations for these odd laws. Some people say that the regulations, in fact, keep up alcohol consumption and the state needs the money. In the year 1949–50 wine and liquor taxes brought in a revenue of 559 million Swedish crowns (about £37 million), the largest single item of revenue in the budget, with the exception of income and capital taxes. This explanation is probably untrue. Although some people may regard it as their patriotic duty to drink as much as possible and increase the revenue, the aim of the regulation—whatever its result may be—was not to increase consumption. These laws were first introduced in 1855 and in their present form in 1917. After the end of the First World War their restrictive effect was great but later it faded away. It is true, all the same, that a Commission found in 1944 that the regulations keep up consumption because almost everybody takes out the maximum amount allowed or else sells his ration-book. The Commission recommended the abolition of the alcohol-laws and in the last ten years everybody has taken their abolition for granted but temperance societies are too strong and there are some vested interests—beer companies and alcohol-officials—connected with the upkeep of the present regulations. For the visitor—and for many Swedes—it seems a little peculiar to keep up a most complicated and expensive system of control just to make people drink harder—but this is one of the triumphs of Swedish bureaucracy and organising ability, so people resign themselves to drinking more and keeping the system in force.

I ALSO visited the premises of the Swedish Academy where the literary Nobel Prizes are awarded. The Academy and the Nobel Library occupy one floor in one wing of a large and very beautiful building. Before reaching the entrance on the first floor of the Academy itself, one has to pass a number of busts of famous Academicians of the past. The actual room where the awards are handed over by the King of Sweden is heavily decorated in gold; heavy candelabra hang from the ceiling; chairs with blue silk covers and white marble statues complete the effect. The room is a masterpiece of interior decoration and the impression is one of real dignity. The neighbouring Committee room, where some of the discussions on the awards are held, contains a lovely long white table covered with a green cloth round which twelve white chairs stand. The Academy has eighteen members but some are very old and hardly ever come to the meetings, while others may be otherwise engaged, so twelve chairs are enough as a rule. In front of the chairman lies a heavy bronze knocker, one end of which is fashioned into the head of Gustaf III. For knocking purposes the chairman uses the other end. Next door there is the small room of the financial secretary. In the Library one finds mostly modern novels in countless languages.

Nobel left £3 million, the interest of which is yearly distributed to those who have contributed most to the benefit of mankind in the preceding year. The literary Nobel Prize, however—contrary to general belief—is not awarded for a single work published in the preceding year but for the achievement of the winner's lifetime. The literary Prize itself is about £12,000. Prizes for chemistry are awarded by the Swedish Academy of Science; for medicine and physiology by the Medical Faculty of Stockholm University; for peace by five members elected by the Norwegian Storting from its own members; and the literary prize by the eighteen gentlemen in question, some of whom are writers, others historians, critics, philologists, and high civil servants. The number eighteen was chosen by Gustaf III, founder of the Academy, because

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the word "eighteen" sounds beautiful in Swedish. Bellman, the poet, and Strindberg were not members of the Academy. Strindberg, in fact, once wrote a deadly satire against the noble institution.

According to Nobel's will "no consideration whatever shall be paid to the nationality of the candidate. . . . The most deserving shall be awarded the prize." The Committee tries to be fair but, naturally enough, more Scandinavians have received the Prize than would be the case if the Prize were distributed by, let us say, the French Academy. Four Swedish authors received it: Selma Lagerlöf, Verner von Heidenstam, Erik Karlfeldt, and Per Lagerkvist — present member; three Norwegians: Bjørnson, Knut Hamsun, and Sigrid Undset; three Danes: Gjellerup and Pontoppidan (joint award) and Johannes Jensen; and one Finn, Frans Silliänpää. That means that in the forty-six years up to 1952 (there were no awards during some of the war years and no award was made in 1935) eleven Scandinavians received the Prize, about one-fourth of the total awards. As far as the English-speaking countries are concerned five Britons and four Americans got the Prize according to the British, and four Britons and five Americans according to the Americans—depending on who owns T. S. Eliot. If, following the McCarren Act, Pearl S. Buck is counted as a Chinese, then there were only three American recipients.

THE first question which comes to one's mind is this: how do members of the Swedish Academy follow the literature of the world in so many languages? This is a difficult problem indeed. Most Academicians read English, French, and German in addition to all the Scandinavian languages with the exception of Finnish. Some read Italian and Spanish and one or two can deal with some of the less well-known languages. Experts—referred to as secretaries—are there to do the rest of the spade-work and call attention to major works which can subsequently be obtained in translation. At the moment, no Academician can read Greek or any of the Slavonic languages, and even the secretaries have difficulty in following Hungarian and Icelandic—the latter a very important tongue at the moment. They go to great lengths, however, to obtain information. The difficulty is that when one of the Academicians learns a language the others do not speak, he almost naturally becomes a champion of that particular literature and nurses some favourites. It is said, rightly or wrongly, that Grazia Deledda—one of the most controversial awards—got the Nobel Prize mostly because Hammarskjöld—father of the present UN Secretary-General—happened to know Italian.

It is admitted that grave mistakes have been committed in the past. As Scandinavians were perhaps unduly favoured, they were also neglected, probably for parochial reasons. Ibsen never received the Prize, nor did Strindberg. On the other hand Karlfeldt, the Swede, received it posthumously—according to some people partly for genuine merit and partly because members wanted to help their former colleague's widow. The practice of posthumous awards has since then been abandoned for good. Among non-Scandinavians who should have received the Prize but didn't are Tolstoy, Gorki, Meredith, Proust, and Valéry. There were a number of controversial awards including the very first ever given. Sully Prudhomme received the Prize because in 1901 he was the President of the French Academy and members of the Swedish Academy thought him a safe bet.

No person can be considered for the Prize unless he is recommended by his national Academy, PEN Club, Society of Authors, or other similar institutions or by at least one member of the Swedish Academy. (As, obviously, no person can possibly get the award unless he is recommended by a majority of the members of the Swedish Academy, this last rule is somewhat pointless.) The preliminary deliberations of the Committee start in February each year. By May only a few runners remain in the race. During the summer vacation the works of these few are re-read by all members. "This makes summer rather hot," one Academician said to me. After the summer recess, the Committee meets at 5 p.m. every Thursday, partly on the premises and partly in a nearby restaurant. Sessions—particularly in the restaurants—are prolonged. Debates become hotter as fewer and fewer candidates are left. In the past the final issue was often decided by votes but nowadays they usually reach a compromise decision. The compromise is sometimes hardly distinguishable from bargaining, on a "your candidate may have it

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this year if mine can have it next year" basis. The biggest row—or should I rather say the most acrimonious controversy—of recent years was about the award to Sir Winston Churchill. A prize-winner is usually chosen by the middle of November but he is not then notified of the decision. Members of the Academy are not sworn to secrecy but absolute discretion is a strong ethical tradition. When the award is made public, a telegram is sent to the prize-winner. The awards are handed over on December 10th—the anniversary of Nobel's death.

I asked a member of the Academy whether anyone was excluded from getting the Prize on any grounds at all and whether he regarded the awards as fair. He said that only "idealistic" authors may get the prize but this restriction is interpreted to mean that any writer, "true to himself" is an idealist. So, in practice, no one is excluded. He also thought that errors were possible but unfairness was not, and lately fewer errors were committed than in the early years. There was, however, one author—whose name I shall not divulge under any circumstances—who pulled strings in his own interest. He did it gently and with tact; he probably deserved the Prize though it should be added that he was less interested in getting it himself than in preventing Theodore Dreiser from getting it. But strings he did pull.

On learning that canvassing in one's own interest was possible, I asked my Academician point-blank: what about me? He raised his eyebrows and asked me why I wanted it. Well, I replied, it was good propaganda, it helps one to get along, and I should also like the money, provided it was tax-free. He told me that in England it was tax-free. He might vote for me—he added on further reflection—and there were two elderly members who would vote for absolutely anyone. That made three. He felt, however, that to persuade the remaining fifteen members "would take time" —as he put it. So the only reliable information I can give about this year's award is that I am not going to get it. Not this year, anyway. My less reliable information is that this year's strongest candidate is an Icelandic novelist. But—as always—I may be wrong.

George Mikes

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Comment

KEEPING UP WITH M. SARTRE

THE French Communist Party recently received an unexpected ultimatum from Jean-Paul Sartre. It was called upon to retract an article which appeared in *l'Humanité* of February 22nd, failing which Sartre predicted a rupture between the Party and those intellectuals "who are in agreement [with it] on all the main themes of [its] politics." In advance, he threw upon the Party the responsibility for any such rupture.

The article which provoked this sudden wrath was reprinted in full, along with Sartre's reply, in the March number of *Les Temps Modernes*. It contains nothing to distinguish it from the usual Communist Party literature devoted to attacking intellectual opponents while reminding fellow-travellers of their place. It was not directed against Sartre, who is not even mentioned, and the insults he takes to himself ("café philosopher," "police-intellectual") are clearly aimed elsewhere—principally at Dyonis Mascolo, a young writer expelled from the Communist Party about three years ago, and secondly at the monthly periodical, *Preuves*, published under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Sartre, however, begins his reply by stating explicitly: "I seize this occasion to turn to those in charge of the Communist Party's intellectual activities and to speak frankly to them"; and the seizure is underlined by his altogether unusual promptness in replying to an attack which did not, after all, touch him directly. There is every reason to think that the trouble did not begin with the *l'Humanité* article, which served merely as a pretext for him to say what he had wanted for some time to say.

The alliance between Sartre and the Communists was consecrated last year, when he and his colleague, Mlle Simone de Beauvoir, were nominated to the World Council of the "Peace Movement." But it was always a *rapprochement à sens unique*. On the Communist side, the only concession was to call off the public attacks on Sartre and his magazine. The wall of suspicion was never breached and Sartre's own attempts to collaborate more closely with the Party were not encouraged. The personality of Sartre makes this attitude of the Party easy to understand. He has twice before committed himself in politics. The first time was under the German occupation, when he joined the Resistance. The second was in the ill-fated *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire* in 1948. On neither of these two occasions did the philosopher and novelist of *engagement* reveal any great aptitude for political activity, but he did show himself extremely zealous to expound the reasons for his actions and to become one of the theoreticians of the movement he had joined. It was the same when he decided to go over to the Communist position. In page after interminable page of *Les Temps Modernes*—in articles always "to be continued," though in fact followed by long months of silence—he defended the decision of the Communist party's political bureau to foment street demonstrations, a decision which was reversed as he was in the process of thinking up his best arguments.

Sartre has always succeeded brilliantly at everything he tried—novels, philosophy, plays—and when he took up politics he may have hoped at least to make his own personal mark, especially since he had at his disposal a literary review of his own. *Les Temps Modernes* today bears no resemblance to what it was in the years immediately after the liberation. One of its founders, the sociologist Raymond Aron, writes regularly for *Figaro* and *Preuves*, and

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another, Jean Paulhan, edits *La Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française*. The philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, co-editor until recently, has withdrawn since becoming a professor at the Collège de France. Sartre now runs his review as his own personal organ, with the aid of two or three young disciples who are also Communist sympathisers. The isolation of Sartre and *Les Temps Modernes* illustrates both the strength and the weakness of the Communist hold upon French intellectuals; it grips them fast, but it offers them neither a public in place of the one they abandon nor the kind of stimulating creative atmosphere which they always need, nor even the contact with the masses of which they dreamed.

In his retort to *l'Humanité*, Sartre protests quite bitterly against the fate of the intellectuals who dedicate themselves to the Party's service. Ostensibly his attack is confined to the author of the offending article, Jean Kanapa, a former disciple who disengaged himself from Sartre in order to devote his whole work to the Party and to edit *La Nouvelle Critique*, the most sectarian of the Communist intellectual journals. He seems to be beside himself at the mere thought of Kanapa, the "cretin," the "sneak," "the most authentic withered fruit of any European Communist party," "whose insolence is only equalled by his servility." If the Party were to disown Kanapa it is probable that Sartre would let the whole matter drop, for the time being. The importance he would attach to this concession appears when he says: "It takes more than one swallow to make a summer, and more than one Kanapa to disgrace a party. If the article commits only its author one can chuck it away without comment." But "the trouble is, though, that *l'Humanité* has put it on page 2. . . ." The tone soon sharpens to a shrill irony and "those who direct the Communist Party's intellectual activities" are required to disprove that they intend to murder intelligence: "Do you really want to reassure [the intellectuals] that they will not become ciphers? Then start by hiding Kanapa in the background; they'll discover him soon enough anyway." This sort of thing fills a whole page, and concludes with: "But if you want to convince the intellectuals, beware of oversimplification; for what they see between the lines will not be a field of creative potentiality but the hypnotic void of imbecility."

Nevertheless, though hurling an ultimatum, "Disown Kanapa or you break our alliance,' Sartre still obeys the rules of his political game He warns the Party of the Moscow Trials against "amalgams" which are characteristic of Franco's Spain, though conceding that "the demands of action sometimes hinder one from making necessary distinctions." He makes much of the fact that Colette Audry, the *Temps Modernes* writer most attacked by Kanapa, has taken part in all the Communist campaigns. He carries goodwill to the point of admitting that a book which may be, in his own eyes, "in no way anti-Communist" can be condemned "for [the Party's] own reasons." And finally, it is in the name of the "*rassemblement* of honest intellectuals" called for by the Party, and which he believes he joined in good faith, that he protests—and how violently!

"It is not enough to agree with you on all the main heads of your policy; we must crown with flowers the books you like and stamp those you dislike into the mud. And if we permit ourselves to weigh a book in scales which are not identical with yours, we are immediately relegated to the ranks of police-intellectuals and St.-Germain-des-Prés philosophers. Are you crazy? Have you learned nothing? Are you again going to sacrifice your alliances to the insane arrogance you maintain towards your allies? Are you blind to the inconsistencies of your position, which are so glaringly obvious to the rest of the world? And Kanapa talks of splitting! And you let him talk! But I ask you: who are the splitters? . . .

"It goes without saying that intellectuals who are Communists will not always agree with us who are not. Let them dispute severely with us, toughly if they wish, so much the better—and we will be as tough as they. But what you have absolutely no right to do is to insult us. You couldn't care less? You'll do it without our permission? Very well: but in that case it is you who will have destroyed the very unity you wished to make."

At the heart of the new quarrel between Sartre and the Communists the real issue, doubtless a realer one than Sartre believes, was this: may *Les Temps Modernes*, however useful it might be to the Communists in other ways, retain the right to praise, even with reservations, a book written by an expelled Party member?

The particular case concerns a long, heavy

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volume, Marxist with a strong existentialist tinge, by Dyonis Mascolo, entitled *Le Communisme*, which was published last autumn by Gallimard. Like Sartre, the author admits the Communist Party's claim to be "the party of the proletariat." By treating Communism as a "theory of material needs" and the Communist movement as a "movement for the satisfaction of material needs" he considers that he is by no means disputing this claim but on the contrary confirming it. But his conclusion is that the intellectuals must "infiltrate" Communism and get control of it; and he was himself expelled from the Party mainly because he resisted the ideological dictatorship which the central committee exercised over the Party's intellectuals. Several of his fellow-members of the Party's 6th Paris section were expelled along with him. They included Robert Antelme, author of *L'Espèce Humaine*, one of the best novels of life in the Nazi concentration camps, and the young novelist, Marguerite Duras, whose already considerable body of work was recognised by the literary juries last year. Dyonis Mascolo himself, through his position in the Gallimard office, is a literary personality of some importance in Paris.

The critical reception of the book and its sales were not such as to give the Communist Party a moment's anxiety. In the *l'Humanité* article which enraged Sartre, Kanapa could only quote four reactions to the book—a discussion organised by *Preuves*, and the notices in *Les Temps Modernes*, *La Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française*, and *L'École Libératrice* (the organ of the teachers' union in which the Communists are a minority), but he gave an example of "amalgam" by adding to the list *Le Populaire-Dimanche* (Socialist Party weekly) which never mentioned the book but which had published a critical notice of the Communist intellectuals' study circles.

To all appearances, it was the debate organised by *Preuves* and its echoes in the daily press which produced the repercussions which culminated in the explosion from *l'Humanité* (the notice in *L'École Libératrice* may also have contributed, but in a lesser degree, because teachers' controversies seldom reach the public ear and Communist teachers have full licence to write in the union's journal). Mascolo himself, and some of his friends, took part in the debate; and there was a long report of it in the next day's *Combat*, so that a considerable public was reached. Thus the Party felt compelled to take action; the form it took was to deny to all intellectuals the right of discussing Communism—and at this point, the wayward fellow-traveller Sartre began to feel that he himself was in danger.

SARTRE'S ultimatum seemed to hit the Party with a force even he could not have expected. Of course, there was no real *crise de conscience*—the Party's basic attitude toward heterodox intellectuals is not open to revision. But there certainly must have been a hurried putting-together of heads, a hasty calculation of tactical pros and cons. For, on March 24th, *l'Humanité* put on display the spectacle of Jean Kanapa eating, in his own way, a species of humble pie. Without actually retracting anything he said, Kanapa assured Sartre that he hadn't meant to imply that Sartre was a police-intellectual, or that *Les Temps Modernes* deserved the awful fate of being mentioned in the same breath with *Preuves*, etc., etc.; and he concluded with a reassertion of the need for a united front between the Party and all intellectuals in the face of the frightful menace of . . . EDC.

So the uneasy alliance goes on—until the next episode. For on this aspect of Sartre's melodramatic career, the concluding words must be his own favourite, inconclusive ones: "to be continued."

Paul Parisot

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Art

FLEET STREET'S PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

In a televised survey of the Royal Academy's exhibition of Dutch paintings early in 1953 Sir Gerald Kelly used the word "bloody" though not, as might perhaps have been expected, in a pejorative sense. This made him a hero of Fleet Street and reporters hung upon his words even when he was giving an address to the students of the Royal Academy schools. His next television programme, on the Flemish exhibition at Burlington House a year later, was naturally watched with rapt attention in the hope that he might conceivably use an even worse word; when he did not, some newspapers described the programme as a failure, though they did not venture to give what may have been the real reason for their disappointment. It is too early yet to say whether, in spite of this set-back, Sir Gerald will continue to be on the list of persons whose words and actions are automatically news. One might expect not, but repetition is the essence of journalism and once a name has been printed sufficiently often in the newspapers the force of inertia will ensure that news editors will continue to associate it with news.

Such an accident may at any time attract the notice of Fleet Street, but its choice of certain artists for attention is not, I believe, always so arbitrary. There does, at any rate, seem to be some common quality in the artists who have by this means gained a very peculiar, often lucrative, but in some ways, one would think—though of course anyone is entitled to say that the grapes are sour—rather dissatisfying kind of fame. At the moment and in this country the two most obvious examples of this class are Augustus John and Epstein; at an earlier date there was perhaps Sir Frank Brangwyn; to a rather lesser extent Dame Laura Knight may still be considered on the list. All these have, by one means or another, become accepted types of the artist, a necessary if rather unimportant character in the crude comedy of humours which is the form that social life so often takes when represented in the news. And when the artist thus becomes a stock figure his chief function is to represent antinomianism; the artist is the man whose peculiar gifts, like the gift or grace of being saved according to the tenets of some religions, entitle him to behave in a way that would be disgraceful or disastrous in anyone else. In particular, of course, his work permits him to be regularly attended by naked slave-girls, but he may also insult anyone he chooses without fear of losing his job; it doesn't matter what his neighbours think of him and he need not have a well-ordered home, expensive furniture, or a high-powered motor car in order to retain his credit and his social position. Even in the police courts the artistic temperament may sometimes be pleaded as a valid excuse and perhaps, after all, it was not pure accident that put Sir Gerald Kelly into the news; by using a bad word he did for the moment suggest that even the President of the Royal Academy was a licensed artist.

But what has our select group of artists done, more than any other painters or sculptors, to conform to this ideal? It is only necessary to think of Utrillo or Modigliani to see how far these artists are from any notable disorder in their lives. It may perhaps be admitted that John and Epstein have sometimes looked rather untidy, and Brangwyn rather unconventional in the appearance they have presented to the press photographer, but a few eccentricities of costume are certainly not enough in themselves to get anyone into the news. On the whole it seems to be their vitality—vitality directed out-

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wards so that it is immediately observable—which is exceptional; they are, I suspect, not unlike those actors, of whom Sir Henry Irving is always said to have been an extreme instance, who have only to walk on to the stage without saying anything to seem a far more dominant personality than anyone beside them. It is noticeable that as such actors always have their wildly uncritical fans, so Brangwyn—though I would not wish to suggest that other and less popular artists are incapable of inspiring a dog-like devotion—had William de Belleroche, Epstein had Bernard van Dieren, and John has not been without similarly hypnotised admirers. Given this magnetic power they only need a very few perfectly conventional stage properties, a beard, for example, or a beret, to be at once accepted as examples of the type; some few and slight deviations from the norm are all that are required, and the imagination will do the rest.

This vitality certainly makes itself felt in their works, at least in the sense that its existence could readily be inferred from them. The large paintings of Brangwyn are done with a great display of gusto; even the most flat and inexpressive passages in John's portraits seem to be the result of recklessness rather than fatigue; in Epstein's bronzes the face of even the most vapid of film stars is endowed with an almost dæmoniac, and also oriental, intensity of expression. By some, indeed, and particularly by those whose standards are the very opposite of those of Fleet Street, this vitality is thought to incapacitate our artists from keeping within the proper limits of their medium or paying due attention to the terms and conditions of their art. J. B. Manson of the Tate Gallery is reported by William de Belleroche as saying: "You see we don't like Brangwyn here . . . Brangwyn is not a painter . . . wields a big brush . . . plenty of vigour and energy . . . but can't paint." "Decidedly Epstein is a master," Roger Fry wrote, "but a master of what?" And Augustus John, though he learned under Tonks to produce drawings of exquisite precision and when in the company of Innes to paint many small panels, romantic but perfectly controlled, of figures in landscape, was certainly driven by some impulse that hardly seems æsthetic to dramatise, by the same great summary gestures, both his sitters and himself.

But it is impossible to believe that Rubens was a man of lowered vitality, or that one would not notice his presence if he were in the room with Brangwyn, Epstein, or John. For the peculiar courses into which their energy sometimes drove these artists we must look for some other reason than the mere fact that they possessed it, and perhaps the simplest reason is that they were themselves inclined at moments to believe the legend they had, perhaps inadvertently, created. The great performer is always in danger of becoming one of his own fans and all three of our artists seem on occasion to have been impelled to behave, not as might have been expected from the nature of the talents they actually had, but as if their genius had really been of the same kind and quality as their most fervent admirers, and also Fleet Street, believed that it was. The legend of Brangwyn was that he used a big brush, and the caricature of him by Max Beerbohm shows him dwarfed into insignificance by the mighty feet and fruit at the bottom of one of his designs. But in fact he is at his best in his most careful drawings, especially those of animals, and it is noticeable that, as his canvas enlarges, so his powers of concentration and co-ordination begin to fail; his largest wall-paintings, like those done for the House of Lords, have almost as little plan or focus as a wall-paper pattern. The legend of Epstein is that he is the great anarch and prime distortionist of modern art, and when Shaw advised him to get commissions for busts of railway directors "he repudiated me with utter scorn." But in fact he is a master of realism, and in particular of portraiture; he is perhaps the most important of all the realistic artists, and certainly the most brilliant of all the portraitists, now working in this country. The legend of John is that he is the most powerful and ruthless of portrait-painters, but his most genuine and individual gift is a vein of lyrical sentiment which seems to find its best expression in the more careful of his drawings and the more restrained of his small paintings.

THE antinomianism that Fleet Street demands of its artists is also expected to appear, in one way or another, in their works. Such artists as ours must necessarily be revolutionaries and rebels, and we all know how wonderfully this conception of their role has been sustained. Epstein's outdoor sculpture has not usually been put in a very conspicuous place, the Hudson Memorial in an out-of-the-way corner of Hyde Park, the British Medical Asso-

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ciation's figures high up on a building and in a street where they were shouted down by competing advertisements and signs, yet the philistines hardly ever failed to find them out and scream for their removal. In Brangwyn's day, but not so much in ours, it was supposed to be the mark of the advanced and original artist in England that foreigners understood him while he was completely neglected at home; the Tate had only one not very important Brangwyn, and that only because it had been bought by the Chantrey Bequest, but there was a Brangwyn museum in Tokyo, a Brangwyn and Belleroche museum in Orange, and in Bruges some four hundred of his works. By comparison with this, Henry Moore's achievement in becoming the only British artist that any foreigner has heard of may be considered of very little account. And when Lord Leverhulme cut the head out of a portrait by John, there was a sympathetic strike in Italy.

But if we are to judge artistic rebellion by the extent that it diverges from the previous state of affairs or by the effect that it had on subsequent events, then none of these artists can be considered revolutionaries at all. Admittedly it is not easy to trace the influences that formed the mature style of Brangwyn, Epstein, and John, but this is largely because they were so many and various as well as because the work of very minor artists may sometimes have played its part. It is certainly not because their style was startlingly different from anything that had gone before, and, in fact, it is safe to say that there is no important stylistic device in the work of any of these artists which had not been used by some predecessor of theirs. As to the influence they have had on others, Brangwyn undoubtedly had a considerable effect on commercial art—the use of galleons in interior decoration and the mountains of sun-kissed fruit that still sometimes appear in posters seem to be largely his fault—and the works of direct imitators of his art may still be seen in some provincial museums. John, I am inclined to think, may have invented the fashion of bobbed hair; Epstein's portrait sculpture has had its imitators. But none of the three can be said to have had a following of any real importance; their effect on British art has been negligible by comparison, for example, with that of Sickert.

But in another sense these artists can a little more reasonably be considered revolutionaries, since their force of character, their individualism, has certainly prevented them from submitting to any tradition, even to a tradition of so loose and insecure a kind as that which obtained, for example, among the Impressionists. The advice and criticism of their fellow-artists is not likely to be very welcome to such as these; at the same time, their superb self-confidence, an inevitable corollary of the magnetism that drew journalists to watch them at work, must have made them averse to criticising too fiercely their own art for themselves. So their work is extraordinarily uneven, they do not know the nature of their talent, and because they cannot learn slowly and patiently from another great artist, as Renoir learned from Cézanne or Sickert from Degas they sometimes fall under the influence of minor talents: Brangwyn, for example, under that of *art nouveau* decorators and John, in spite of all his virtuosity, under that of the much less accomplished Innes. Thus it may well be a misfortune for an artist of great talent to have this mysterious gift of something suspiciously like leadership added to him, and at the same time we do well to be suspicious at sight of anyone who gets, even if unwillingly, too much attention from the press. But just because the output of these artists is inevitably uneven, as well as because their blunders are so much more conspicuous than the weaknesses of others since even in these the force of their personality makes itself felt, it is necessary not to take the easy course of condemning, as the more erudite critic is always being tempted to do, the whole of their work outright. It is well to remember the example of Rodin, a spellbinder if ever there was one and perhaps the greatest of all our modern demagogues of the arts; he did not appeal to M. Vollard, but for all that he produced some very beautiful works of both drawing and sculpture.

Is it possible to suggest any conceivable successor to these three idols of Fleet Street in the years to come? My own suggestion, which I make with every conceivable reservation, hesitation, and apology, would be Mr. Lucian Freud. He has at any rate the qualification that his best works are for the most part small and that all his pictures are executed in an exceedingly patient and laborious, almost a miniaturist's, technique; this should encourage the legend of his giant's audacity and brutal force.

Alan Clutton-Brock

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Letter from Rangoon

A PRIME MINISTER MAKES A MOVIE

It is unusual, to put it mildly, for a Prime Minister to turn playwright; and the truth is that Burma's U Nu was writing plays before he became Prime Minister. His drama, *The People Win Through*, which forms the basis for the film of the same name that is now being shown in Burma, is therefore, for him, no new departure, but represents a return to an art medium in which he elected to work more than fifteen years ago, for he began to write plays shortly after he was graduated from the university, while headmaster of a school in the rural areas. At that time, he had become deeply interested in the Freudian analysis of human behaviour, and among the most notable of his writings are two complementary plays dealing with the problem of marital incompatibility. After seven years as a teacher, he returned to the University in the Faculty of Law, and was immediately caught up in the political ferment of nationalist agitation against the British, which was naturally strongest amongst the young intellectuals with whom he was thrown into contact.

As he became increasingly involved in politics, U Nu, who has said that he had no desire for a political career and wanted only to be a writer, began to devote his literary efforts more and more to political ends. Expelled from the University and jailed for his nationalistic activities, he wrote the best-known of his novels, a story of prison-life. His first literary work after the war was entitled *What is Marxism ?* a sympathetic explanation of the creed against a background of Buddhist principles. Together with the political ideas which had come to fill his mind, U Nu also brought to his writings the attitude of the teacher. The two strains fused into a type of tract-like writing, providing the explanation and elucidation of political ideas in the simplest terms.

The idea for his play, *The People Win Through*, arose during a period of political upheaval and disintegration for Burma. Only two months after the country had gained its independence in 1948, the Communist Party, which had been a co-partner in the struggle for freedom, turned against the established Government, and launched an armed revolution. The infant republic, widely devastated by the Japanese war, barely groping towards the beginnings of true national unity, and hampered by all the weaknesses of a country faced with the task of building literally everything, including its armed forces, from the ground up, was cruelly hit by the revolt. Over large areas of the country, the Communists seized control or made sporadic attacks on defenceless villages, and the people, bewildered by the new conflict whose basis they were far from understanding, were swept helplessly between the opposing forces and were reduced to conditions even worse than those they had suffered in the preceding war years.

Although *The People Win Through* in its movie presentation appears as an anti-Communist vehicle, this was not the predominant aim of its writer. The theme that he set out to express was the destructiveness and futility of the method of seizing political power by force, instead of through democratic process. The history of Burma has always been clouded by this same tendency to take a short cut to political power by armed revolt, and U Nu was obsessed with the idea that with the coming of independence the pattern would repeat itself, with one leader after another

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fighting his way to power and then being felled by a rival.

To demonstrate forcibly the evils of this pattern, he at first conceived the idea of tracing the theme through three periods of history, citing actual events in the past, and ending with the present period. But this proved unwieldy in dramatisation and he abandoned the idea in favour of a single play dealing only with the Communist revolt. It is a measure of the importance he attached to the play that he found time to write it at a moment when the internal situation was absorbing all his faculties, and he is said to have written the first scene in a few leisure hours snatched during an official journey by river-craft to a town in the Irrawaddy Delta. There is no disguising the fact that the play was a piece of political propaganda, or political education, if that phrase is less odious. In Western terms, there are marked artistic defects in its dramatic structure. But it should be noted that the play, like other plays by the same author, was written to be read, and not for the stage. The modern Burmese stage has no counterpart of the Western drama, and, for the most part, producers improvise their own plays which are mainly short sketches and burlesques, with no attempt at full-length dramas. There is a certain amount of mutual exclusiveness between the *literati* and the actors in the modern theatre, while the classical drama, of course, continues with the plays written about a century ago. Still, even as a play for reading, rather than acting, *The People Win Through* lost much from its preoccupation with putting over a political message. It was heavily overburdened with long political harangues and there was a lack of continuity from one scene to another. The scenes, in fact, were more in the nature of separate dramatic episodes: minor characters appeared, said their piece, and then were lost for ever.

The movie version, which has made both additions and alterations to the original, has gone a long way towards overcoming these defects. It has tied the loose ends together, given dramatic form to the whole, and has showed itself capable of holding a Burmese audience as sheer entertainment. This in itself is something of an achievement, since *The People Win Through* is not in the usual pattern of Burmese movies. The Burmese are a relatively unsophisticated people, and their entertainment tends towards innocence and naïveté. Current Burmese movies (which cater frankly for the masses and are seldom patronised by the intelligentsia) are of the *genre* of the paper-backed Western, with bold, bad villains, unbelievable heroes and heroines, and a strong emphasis on romance, blood-and-thunder sequences, and slap-stick. *The People Win Through*, which openly takes the position of a semi-documentary, is therefore something entirely new in the field of Burmese films.

THE film version has, in a sense, digressed from the original theme of the play, because what emerges most clearly is not so much the lesson that armed revolution is a mistake, but the personal disillusionment of the young Communist intellectual who forms the central figure of the drama, his retreat from the Communist Party, and the release he finds from it in death. Each of the principal characters represents and personifies one of the ideas which the author is trying to get across. The scene opens on the eve of the Communist insurrection in 1948. The central figure, Aung Min, son of a middle-class family, is intellectually attracted to Communism and has become a member of the Party with all the ardent faith of an idealistic youth. Over against him is set his friend, Aye Maung, also conversant with Marxist doctrines but opposed to the idea of an armed revolt; on him falls the task, in the script, of advancing the intellectual argument against the Burmese Communist Party. There is also Aung Min's father, a devout Buddhist, who symbolises the abiding religious background of the people, sorrowing over his son who has become a rebel, and praying continuously for peace.

With the shifting of the scene to the rural areas where the Communists have gone into revolt, the story traces the gradual disillusionment of the young intellectual. Attached as Political Commissar to a unit of the "People's Liberation Army," he is revolted by the excesses of the unit commander, a man who rules by the gun and has no time for ideologies—this character is a type of rebel-bandit very familiar to Burmese audiences. After many brave attempts to stifle his doubts for the sake of the cause, Aung Min determines to report the brutal commander to Party headquarters, confident in the belief that such atrocities are allowed only because they are unknown to the leadership. The turning-point comes for him when he finds that his leaders regard the

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ruthless soldier, not as a monster, but as a useful instrument.

In the meantime, the play has introduced yet another message-bearing character, the village youth, who, untouched by politics, and totally unable to evaluate the merits of the Communists' propaganda, has yet been roused to fury by their repressive tactics so that he raises a group of volunteers from the village to wage his own fight against the Communists. He it is who carries the theme which is expressed in the title of the drama, which literally translated into English means "The Sound of the People's Victory," implying the rejection of the Communist revolution, not by the Government or the intellectuals, but by the peasant masses themselves.

When the main political themes have been stated and the disillusionment of the chief protagonist is complete, the story moves swiftly to a climax. The unit commander, learning of Aung Min's defection, intercepts him on his flight to Government-held territory and wounds him fatally. The drama is rounded off, too neatly, with an exciting dash of the wounded hero for the safety of his home, and with the final scene where the religious motif is brought back, as his dying steps are supported towards the family altar by his old father and his wife, to enable him to make a last obeisance before he dies. It is of particular interest that although the film is unambiguously anti-Communist in tone and intent this central character is never at any time portrayed in an unsympathetic light. He remains throughout a sincere though misguided idealist, and after his death his friend tells his only son that the father was a hero who gave his life for his country.

THE timing of the release of the movie version has had an important effect on its reception. This has worked both ways. The original meaning of the play, namely, the futility of the Communist revolt, has been to some extent lost, since the years that have elapsed since it was written have brought a changed situation in which the Communists no longer pose as grave a threat to the country, and the seeds of democracy have taken firmer root than they had at that time. On the other hand, the film has gained from the fact that most of the people who see it know from personal experience that the events it portrays are not propagandist exaggerations, but have actually happened time and again in the recent past. This lends a new appeal, that of familiarity, to the drama.

Written and produced for the "common man," the film apparently has real appeal at the level to which it was directed, but has been less enthusiastically received by the intelligentsia. This is partly due to its over-simplification and contrived dramatic effects, which were necessary to make it a vehicle of popular appeal in this country. It is also partly due, however, to the unfortunate gulf which has existed, to some extent, between the intelligentsia and the Government in the post-independence period. From this stems a somewhat derisive attitude towards all that can be regarded as pro-Government propaganda.

As I write, in mid-March, the film is in its fourth week at one of the big Rangoon cinemas, a longer run than most successful films. (The only film to top it this year is the record-breaking *Yadanabon*, a Burmese adaptation of *East Lynne*!) Reports from the other parts of the country say that the Prime Minister's film, which is being shown in five of the larger towns simultaneously, is drawing good audiences—despite the fact that the people know it will be exhibited free by the Government in a few weeks' time.

Daphne Whittam

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Communications

ON POLITICAL NEUROSES

SIR—Scientific analysis of political opinion is still in its infancy. True, the public opinion poll, when properly conducted, with weighted samples and unweighted questions, can give us a statistical breakdown of public feeling on a certain day. And if the same questions are repeated at regular intervals, it is possible to graph the fluctuations of public opinion over a period. But this kind of inquiry is superficial. It only reveals *how* people react to specific questions, not *why* they react. It traces the path of change, but never gets near to its cause.

Is it possible to go beneath the surface and to discover how public opinion is formed? Can we formulate laws about its behaviour, which can be submitted to the only truly scientific test, prediction and verification? This, I think, is the serious question raised by Mr. Koestler's suggestion that we should try to apply the methods of abnormal psychology to political behaviour. He proposes, if I understand him rightly, that we should work on the hypothesis that our political views—considered either as the views of one individual or those of a group—are neurotically conditioned. After throwing out one or two examples to confirm this diagnosis, he reaches the conclusion that a normal and sane political behaviour can only be achieved by those who are ready to submit to an examination or self-examination similar to that employed by the psychoanalyst.

It would be absurd to dismiss this suggestion peremptorily. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that the process by which the opinions and loyalties of public life are formed differs intrinsically from that by which the opinions and loyalties of private life are formed. Mr. Koestler rightly remarks that the belief that man is a rational political animal belongs along with other optimistic delusions of 19th century progress. But surely he is wrong in asserting that the discovery of man's political irrationality, and the systematic application of the discovery to practical politics, was first made by the totalitarians. Every practical politician since the time of Cleon of Athens, and every political theorist from Plato to de Tocqueville, has realised that public opinion must be ill informed and in danger of exploitation by demagogues. Plato's solution for this problem was the same as the Communists'—to institute a dictatorship of philosopher kings who would feel themselves morally entitled to feed the ignorant public with "noble lies." The democratic reply to Plato and Lenin is not to deny the irrationality of most men but to assert that, on the historical evidence available, societies which choose their rulers, however irrational the grounds of choice, are at least as stable as hereditary oligarchies or revolutionary dictatorships—and have the added advantage of enlarging the area of freedom for their members.

It is true, however, that under representative institutions there is always a risk that freedom may be destroyed by a deluded public opinion. So far I agree with Mr. Koestler. Where I differ from him is in his belief that the best way to cure these delusions is to assume that they are neuroses.

Certainly it is useful for each of us to recognise how often our own judgements and loyalties are determined by irrational motives, of which we are scarcely conscious. *But the causes which prompt me to make a political judgement do not validate or invalidate the judgement itself.* I agree with Mr. Koestler in condemning the policy of appeasement practised by the British and French governments in the 1930's. But I cannot leap to his conclusion that the advocates of appeasement were neurotic, while we opponents of appeasement were normal and sane. As a matter of historical fact, M. Bonnet and Mr. Chamberlain practised appeasement not for neurotic reasons but on cool, if wrong-headed, political calculations, and Mr. Churchill's opposition was based on equally cool and right-headed calculations. As for the public opinion ranged behind the protagonists, there was a mixture of prejudice, passion, and rational

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calculation on both sides. Every practical politician knows that, in any political controversy, there is never a division between reason on the one side and passion and prejudice on the other. A neurotic may support appeasement, but he may equally support collective security, and we shall not get very far by labelling political opinions we dislike "neurotic" and those we agree with "normal." To do so is to apply to group judgements terms which scientifically are only applicable to the individual personality.

The truth is that the formation of public opinion must be studied in relation to the political institutions and behaviours in which it grows. The mistake of 19th century theorists was to believe that rational self-interest is the dominant motive of political life, whereas in truth the dominant motive is loyalty to a group, party, or state. It is only by studying the nature of this loyalty that we shall be able to understand the distortions of memory and judgement to which Mr. Koestler calls attention. In a Communist state, which enforces monolithic discipline, loyalty is also monolithic, and any dissent is felt, even by the dissenter, to be treasonable. Only a few conscious revolutionaries can deliberately challenge the official line without succumbing to a sense of guilt. How, then, can a change of policy, which demands a change in the views held by public opinion, be achieved in Russia? By a crisis, in which a conspiracy is unmasked and the general public is called upon to show monolithic loyalty by expunging from its memory every fact and speech which was orthodoxy a few weeks ago. In a totalitarian state, history has constantly to be rewritten in order to prove that the present line is and always has been correct. Hence the amazing distortions and omissions which we observe not only in Soviet history-writing but in the current views of well-educated Soviet citizens. They are not due to any neurosis, but to the institutions of totalitarianism.

So far so good. What is not so easily acceptable is that distortions, no less grave but of a different kind, are essential within a democracy. We all recognise the role of the division of powers in Parliamentary institutions. But few have observed that the division of loyalties is equally important. The British are loyal to the Monarchy, the unitary symbol of the United Kingdom, the Americans to the Flag and the Constitution. But in a democracy most of us are also loyal supporters of a party (the number of independent voters is far smaller than is usually imagined) and a great many other groups and associations. *The stability of any democracy depends not on superimposing a single unitary loyalty and viewpoint but on maintaining conflicting loyalties and viewpoints in a state of tension.* How far should I suppress my Party loyalty in the national interest? How far should I let my civic or regional interests carry me in revolt against the national Party to which I belong? How long should I stay a member of that Party, even when it violates, as it constantly does, the principles that it preaches? Every organisation, whether state, party, or voluntary group, to which I belong demands my uncritical loyalty. It is only where a plurality of loyalties are permitted, and where we are constantly and vainly seeking to resolve their conflicts, that we can be free men.

In a democracy, each of these conflicting group loyalties seeks to suppress or distort my judgement of the situation. If I feel no loyalty to the Labour Party, I shall not be much good to Socialism. Yet, in order to be loyal, I must not only make speeches and write articles which suppress certain unfavourable facts about the Labour Party (and favourable facts about the Conservative Party!). I shall also be inclined instinctively to suppress these facts in my memory. Unfair, partisan judgements and highly coloured memories are the stuff of democratic politics. The completely normal man, whom Koestler describes as facing all the facts soberly, will be incapable of the loyalty which party politics demands of the citizen. Critically detached from the common herd, he becomes an armchair critic or a floating voter. Just as no one can be completely objective about his wife or his children as long as he is fond of them, and just as lapses of memory are essential to domestic happiness, so no one can be completely objective about his party if he is to be a useful member of it.

In Britain, which is a two-party state, this kind of partisan loyalty deliberately and artificially creates a debate between two ideologies. The Conservative Party and the Labour Party each has its Utopian myth, which is often remote from the realities of day-to-day politics. But it is essential that the active politician should identify this myth with the machine in which he works. Thus, the public discussion of great issues becomes a duel between two rival, partisan and highly distorted interpretations of history and of current events. If you ask any politician his private view, he will usually admit to you that these partisan interpretations are unfair, and Mr. Koestler seems to conclude that this gap between what the politician says on the platform and what he says in private is a proof of neurosis. But in fact the democratic system cannot work without incessant public suppressions of personal conviction. Any member of a Cabinet, for instance, may have to argue passionately for a particular policy in secret and then, when the decision is taken against him, have to argue in

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public for the view he has condemned a few hours before. And this kind of distortion and suppression is not limited to Ministers. It is easy enough for a backbencher in the Commons, or a party spokesman outside, to support the machine when he thinks it right. The test of loyalty comes when he is asked to support it, knowing it to be in the wrong. To try to explain distortions of fact which arise from such tensions in psychoanalytical terms is to overlook the relationship between political judgements and political institutions.

There is a second feature of democratic politics to which attention must be drawn. A totalitarian state can switch its policy and *order* public opinion to show its loyalty by accepting the new line. In a Western democracy, whose public opinion is subjected to the battle of rival party ideologies, such an automatic switch is impossible. Here we face one of democracy's most difficult problems—how to change public opinion fast enough to keep up with changing events. A democratic party can very rarely be persuaded to give up even one of its traditional principles, and can never afford to scrap its central myth. Conservatives must defend free enterprise even when they are actually introducing state planning. A Labour Government must defend as true Socialism policies which have very little to do with it. The job of party leaders is often to persuade their followers that the traditional policy is still being carried out, even when this is demonstrably not true. In this process of justifying practical policies in terms of traditional principles, the most astonishing distortions and omissions are bound to occur. How, for instance, was the Labour Party to transform the vague philosophy of revolutionary pacifism, which it preached in the 1920's, into a doctrine of collective security against aggression? How, between 1945 and 1949, was the switch to be made from the belief that Socialist Britain should mediate between Communist Russia and Capitalist America to the acceptance of a junior role in an alliance dominated by America? Rationalist spectators of politics, such as Mr. Koestler, will no doubt say that a party should scrap an out-of-date policy and adopt a new one. But this, in fact, is impossible without destroying the structure of ideological loyalty which binds it together. Adaptation must proceed in a cocoon of blurred and often contradictory policy statements, which hold together the contending factions, until finally a new compromise policy spreads its wings. The greatest single brake on the adaptation of democracy to its environment is the reluctance of public opinion and of political parties to see their myths modified and their clichés amended. Yet, without those myths and clichés and the loyalties beneath them, parliamentary democracy is impossible.

To an observer with no feeling for the workings of democracy, all this appears to be a product either of cynical wire-pulling or of political neurosis. Such misunderstandings can only be removed by understanding how public opinion is related to democratic institutions, and the role which conflicting loyalties play in maintaining a free society.

R. H. S. Crossman

House of Commons

WILDE'S MOURNERS

Sir—It is a pity so well-balanced an article as "The Artist in Prison" by Albert Camus in your issue for March should conclude with a statement unreconcilable with the facts as we know them, that the hearse of Wilde "was followed not by his brilliant companions of the old days but by the ordinary people of the Rue des Beaux Arts."

Unless we except Jean Dupoirier, landlord of the Hôtel d'Alsace and kind friend and benefactor of Wilde in his last days, the hearse was followed, according to Anna, Comtesse de Brémont by "some fifty or more people representing various literary and artistic societies." The chief mourners were, and all biographers agree on that point, Lord Alfred Douglas, Robert Ross, and Reginald Turner.

How else can these be described but as the "brilliant companions of the old days"?

S. Thomas Ansell

London, S.W.6

YOUNG WRITERS

Sir—May I say first of all that I am not writing on behalf of Messrs. Culham, Winning, or Xanadu, nor, indeed, for Miss Baxter, all of whom Mr. Spender mentions in his editorial in the March issue. If I speak for anyone other than myself, it is for the generation now at the university, the generation whose poems can be found in *Oxbridge Poetry, 1954*, just as yours can be found in *Oxbridge Poetry, 1928*. The oldest of us were born in the year following the publication of that book, and the youngest in the year the Spanish Civil War began. None of us were of an age to take an active part in the Second World War; many had a chopped and scrappy education because of that war, and many were uprooted to the United States or the Dominions. What special effects this had on our childhood it is still too early to tell, but it may partly explain what we are trying, as writers, to do. I shall try to use the adjective "young" as little as possible.

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I find the naïveté of Henry James Joyce Jr. puzzling, and certainly not representative. For instance, you tell me that he finds "politics the most tabu word in your outmoded vocabulary." It is true we find the hearty, back-slapping business of wearing coloured shirts distasteful; very few of us would lift a finger, let alone a banner, to lend a little demagogy to Mr. X's parliamentary campaign in Oxbridge or Redbrick. But if the word is big enough to include the outcry at the execution of the Rosenbergs, the close interest with which Adlai Stevenson's presidential battle was followed, or even the sharp attention paid to ENCOUNTER, then we are political. Remember that most of us had spent two years in military service before we ever came to Oxbridge; and no one can spend that time as a conscript and a foreigner in the Canal Zone, Germany, or Korea without being "political." I'd hazard, indeed, that as a generation we have had considerably more experience of political actions and attitudes in the raw than your own at our age; so much more that we have been forced, perhaps, into a sort of social maturity before we have found emotional maturity. Growing up quickly in an atmosphere shifting from danger and uncertainty to apathy and cynicism, we are not very willing to leap on the nearest partisan bandwagon; but lack of loyalty to, or even lack of ardent interest in, a particular faction does not, surely, preclude a concern with the social actions of men; that is, politics.

You find us, I gather, tame and timid. We are not "experimenting," are not "giving our life-blood to the struggle." You don't actually use the chilly word, but you suggest that we are consolidating. This is a term which some kindly critics are now using in almost a commendatory way about the work which our generation is producing. If they mean that we have learned a good deal technically from Auden, Empson, and Yeats, they have some justification; but even a quick reading of the current Oxbridge literary magazines and anthologies should show that we are no more closely in their debt, in either technique or content, than was your own generation to, say, Eliot, Hopkins, and Owen. The truth of it is that we are, on the whole, attempting *subjects* which the "progressives" of the late twenties and early thirties (now middle aged) still consider unfashionable. The political feeling of which I spoke earlier does not try to illuminate "Society" with brash and sanguine slogans; rather, it concerns itself with the individual confronted by human problems (such as love, authority, and power). The resultant poems are quieter, less immediate, less "obvious," because they are reaching for a kind of truth which is more subtle and delicate. And if we are sometimes too cautious, too thin-blooded, perhaps it is because we are appalled by the wreck which your generation, more ebullient, impulsive and (dare I say it?) naïve than ours, brought down on both our heads by the "old alliances" of which Henry James Joyce Jr. speaks, and even more so by your apparent inability to build anything out of that wreck but more slogans—this time for the *other* side.

As for becoming officials, conformists, apostles of orthodoxy—perhaps, as you suggest, your strictures were unnecessary on that score. A don does not automatically become a fossil, nor does a Civil Servant inevitably become a Humbert Wolfe. What we lack in fire perhaps we gain in self-knowledge; and a college room or a government office can, with self-knowledge, become quite as useful a vantage point as a barricade in Madrid or a soap-box in Hyde Park.

ANTHONY THWAITE

Christ Church, Oxford

SIR—Was it by chance or design that Mr. Spender's "Letter to a Young Writer" appeared in the excellent 6th number of ENCOUNTER? In either event he has surely ignored the very nature of the "encounter" that comes to light in its pages so well. How is it possible, today, to imagine "some centre where the individual's sense of life provides all-important values whereby to judge the modern world"? Quotations from Camus, Malraux, Weldon, or Dr. Kinsey, to be found in that same number, hardly seem necessary as further examples of the attitude of mind implied in Samer Sen's

I am the greatest truth of all,
Nothing beyond,

and however profoundly one may disagree, or wish to disagree, with this interpretation, we are surely all of us, young and old, equally unhappy about our inability to find any "centre" in the space-time continuum.

CYRIL LUCAS

Little Ormesby, Norfolk

GUILT BY DISASSOCIATION

SIR—Antonia White, in her translation of Albert Camus, uses the word "disassociate." This word is excessively sibilant, long, and wrong; ENCOUNTER should dissociate itself from its use.

PETER MARKS

Leigh-on-Sea, Essex

[Long, yes; excessively sibilant, perhaps; wrong, no—see O.E.D. We both dissociate and disassociate ourselves from any effort to impose either term on our writers and translators.—Ed.]

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THE "GOOD AMERICAN"

SIR—I have recently returned from a visit to the USA, so I read Mr. Fiedler's "The Good American" with special interest, and whilst I must admit that many of his criticisms are all too true I find it unfortunate that he should base his observations on his experiences in Italy. No one has a higher admiration for the post-war Italian intellectuals and writers than myself. But is it wise to consider them as typical of the rest of Western Europe? All through its brilliant but tortured history, Italy has suffered from foreigners and occupying powers and there is no doubt that Fascism left a bitter heritage. From my own experience I have found that Italians may love you as an individual but they do not really admire or like the foreign visitor merely because he or she is American, English, or French. This does not mean to imply that intellectuals in Great Britain or France are inclined to understand Americans better than the Italians but I do think that there are a number in both countries who make the attempt and have a genuine sympathy for the USA.

I find, however, that Mr. Fiedler's bitter comments are timely because I, too, have been profoundly shocked by the ignorance and misunderstanding displayed by people in Great Britain about the American way of life. I also know from my own experience that his account of the European intellectual's bitter attitude towards the USA is no overstatement. Still, anguished cries will not solve the thorny problem of how to improve relations between the United States and the peoples of Western Europe. What can be done to improve the situation? Are the Americans as barbarous as Mr. Fiedler's Italian intellectuals pretend?

Personally, I have long thought that the Americans are to blame, in many ways, for the present European misconception of American civilisation. Although the Americans are quick to criticise other nations they have always been extremely sensitive about any adverse comment on their own country. Yet the American Government has made little effort to instruct the rest of the world in the best aspects of contemporary American culture. Alas, the State Department in Washington has a deep-rooted fear of the intellectual, and culture as a whole has been regarded as something rather "pansy" and un-American. Perhaps this attitude on the part of American officials is a relic of the pioneer days when men were men. But it has not helped the cause of the USA abroad.

Having lived and worked in the United States a number of times, I am convinced that it is urgent for the American Government to pay more attention to cultural activities. There is so much that is good and worthwhile in the present American way of life that it is tragic that most of it is unknown to the average European. For myself, I would like to see an exhibition of the American Primitive Paintings brought over to Europe, and I think that a great deal more could be done to publicise abroad the achievements of American architecture. More important still, I feel that Washington should organise some body like the British Council to propagate modern American culture abroad. The American Embassies also should be encouraged to entertain leading intellectuals and literary editors in the various countries to which they are accredited. I am sure that one of the reasons why so many European intellectuals are so sour and bitter about the US is that few of them have ever been invited to an American Embassy reception or entertainment. Remember how pleased Voltaire was to be received at Versailles!

It is too easy, however, for a European to advise the Americans about what to do about their cultural activities, and perhaps I am repeating the mistake made by so many European intellectuals. Personally, I feel it is the duty of the British, in particular, to help the Americans in their present dilemma. Some time ago, Princess Marthe Bibesco, commenting upon the post-war scene, remarked to me: "The British are the Greeks in the new American Empire," and as the Greeks helped the Romans in artistic and cultural matters in the past so I think we in Great Britain should try to help our American cousins. After all, we have the advantage of using the same language, and we have many cultural and political traditions in common.

During my recent stay in the USA, I was struck by the enormous interest shown by the average American in British affairs. I was questioned about the present political situation in the British Isles and I found that many Americans wanted to learn something about the new English writers, the latest movements in painting and music, and they displayed an eager curiosity about the present British way of life. On my return to this country, I regret to say that I found that the majority of my fellow-countrymen did not show a similar interest in the USA. Or if they did, they were often sadly misinformed. Surely, what is needed at this present crisis in world affairs is that the British Government make it possible for more British subjects to visit the United States and see conditions for themselves? At present, many would-be British visitors are prevented from doing anything through lack of dollars.

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One final comment on Mr. Fiedler's views. The very nature of his somewhat hysterical and anguished protests indicates that it is not easy for the European intellectual to discuss American affairs in an objective manner. As I said earlier, the Americans have always been extremely sensitive to any criticism, and during my recent visit I noticed a new form of defence mechanism on the part of most of my American friends. Conscious of their newly gained world power, I discovered that most Americans today are intoxicated with the unlimited possibilities of their own country. I found that they no longer apologise for their weaknesses or mistakes but positively exult in the American way of life. This new-found enthusiasm for everything American is reflected in the sudden passion for books on the American past, collections of Americana, and the rediscovery of the manifold natural beauties of their own land. However, the younger generations in particular are conscious of their world responsibilities, and there is a genuine interest in the activities of the United Nations, and the fact that its headquarters are in New York gives the average American a special interest in this organisation. Mr. Fiedler certainly paints a dark picture of the young American's experience in Europe. But there is still hope if we made a determined effort to understand each other's problems, and try to solve them.

DEREK PATMORE

London, W.2

ON "NEGATIVE LIBERALISM"

SIR—I should be grateful if you could spare a little space for a comment from a reasonably typical British middle-of-the road point of view on Mr. Kristol's editorial "On 'Negative Liberalism'," in the January issue.

I think it probable that when an English writer, as distinct from an American, uses the word "liberal," the set of notions he has in mind is much more complex than the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition "favourable to changes and reforms tending in the direction of democracy." By a liberal society, he may even mean one in which the reasoned opinions and sentiments of the educated individual are not excessively subject to the pressure—which, in a sense, *can* be called "democratic" pressure—of mass excitement and mass prejudice; he may even think that it is only in a society embodying a certain aristocratic element (represented here, for instance, functionally by the public schools, the older universities, the higher civil service, experts of various sorts, people who sit on committees or direct public, or semi-public, cultural organisations, and so on) that liberalism in this sense, the sense of de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, is likely to survive. Liberalism, in the English sense, goes with a distrust of the more facile and abstract group emotions, or individual ones. A liberal, in the English sense, might often, I think, admire Spinoza, or the general attitude of mind for which Spinoza stood; and he would feel, like Spinoza, that "hatred and fear" are not very good foundations for any rational moral or political attitude—that they are emotions which tend to blind and limit man, to put him in bondage to his own illusions, and not to make him free. The positive foundations of liberalism, in this English sense, would much more resemble what Spinoza called "the intellectual love of God" or what, I suppose, we might call today the love of truth and reason and righteousness for their own sakes, the faith that truth is great and will prevail.

Now, what in your context, and in that of the passage you quote, does "Communism" mean? It means, I think, a variety of things which should be distinguished.

(1) It means a fairly coherent body of arguments and insights based partly on Hegelian idealism, partly on Ricardian economics, partly on the experience of European and Russian radical politicians since about 1848; partly too on the 19th century prestige of natural science and the 19th century revolt against religion, and so on. What is loosely called "Marxism" in this sense amounts to a body of more or less logically connected doctrines about a variety of things of the sort that is traditionally termed "a philosophy." In that sense it seems to me as silly to say that we should "hate and fear" Communism as to say that we should hate and fear Platonism, Aristotelianism, neo-Thomism, or what not. If a "philosophy" in this sense is open to criticism, the criticism should be philosophical—and hate and fear do not lead to philosophical insight; objective detachment may do so.

(2) It means, too, a kind of "religion" which has been based on this "philosophy," a book-religion, treating the fundamental documents not as philosophical texts, but as sacred books. The general argument against this sort of treatment of fundamental documents applies, of course, to most world-religions, and even the unreligious man today usually no longer feels that he should "hate and fear" religion as such. He should rather study the needs it serves, the roots it grows from, what people get or think they get from it.

(3) It means the official "philosophy" and/or "religion" of a group of more or less despotic

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governments with which the relations of the Western World are exceedingly uneasy, though we are technically at peace with these governments and maintain diplomatic and treaty relations with them and meet most of them, or rather representatives, round international council tables.

This third sense of "Communism" is, I think the most relevant to your editorial. You seem to imply that we ought to "hate and fear" the Governments of Russia, China, etc. and the ideas that impel them to the kind of international and domestic actions we morally disapprove of. And you compare this "hatred and fear" to the liberal's justified "hatred and fear" of Nazism and Fascism during the 1930's.

We did not, however, go to war with Germany and Germany's allies in 1939 because Germany had a "bad" government. Great Britain went to war in accordance with her treaty obligations and in defence of what is sometimes called the balance of power and sometimes the liberties of Europe. Russia and the United States entered the war in self-defence against aggression by Germany and Japan. However deeply and genuinely we all disapproved of the horrors that were taking place in Nazi Germany, neither the bulk of the British, nor the American, people would have followed a political leader who had said "Let us declare war upon Germany in order to rescue the liberals, the men of the Left, and the Jews from persecution." Had we done so, Germany could have, in accordance with accepted international custom, accused us of unprovoked aggression, and very probably most of the liberals, the men of the Left, and even the Jews would have rallied to the defence of their injured country. In other words, if moral disapproval of a country's internal government were traditionally considered a legitimate reason for declaring war on that country, wars would be even more frequent than they are, and that is why such disapproval is not considered a legitimate reason for declaring war. A national policy based on national self-interest and an honourable adherence to treaty obligations may look selfish and legalistic, but it is less dangerous to peace than a policy based on the crusading spirit.

This has relevance to your remark about the sufferings of liberals and others behind the Iron Curtain. Certainly no person is humane if he is indifferent to these sufferings; but no man, taking a longer view, is humane either if he is indifferent to the even more widespread suffering and destruction that would be caused by a third world war waged, on our side, for the sole purpose of rescuing these victims and establishing liberal institutions modelled on our own over large areas of the earth's surface, areas which have never known liberal institutions and the masses of whose people have never expressed any desire for them. It is again not sentimental, but in accordance with the lessons of history, to suppose that as the governments of Russia grow older and more secure they may perhaps also grow more tolerant and more flexible, and less possessed, on their own side, with the dangerous crusading spirit. To believe that it is still possible to work in a realistic spirit for peace and understanding in international relationships is not to be a crypto-Communist. It does not prevent us always being ready to defend our own Western interests, our own liberal traditions, our own international rights, and to repel aggression.

It is to the liberal tradition, in Mill's sense and de Tocqueville's, that we owe much that is finest in our Western life: the freedom of debate, the achievements of natural science, the richness and variety of Western philosophy, the readiness of Western Governments to accept frank and sharp criticism in parliaments or in the press, our tolerance of religious differences and irreligion, our competing multitude of schools of art and literature, our humanitarianism. A critic who complains that your articles tend to express too exclusively a "negative liberalism," perhaps has in mind that, if we must fight again, it will not be because of a blinding "hatred and fear," but for love of these rich, flexible, noble, and, it may be, still growing traditions.

London, S.E. 6 IAIN FLETCHER

[Mr. Kristol comments: I did not urge—no man in his senses would urge—that we go to war with Russia or China out of a dislike of their system of government. Like Mr. Fletcher, I am all for "peace and understanding"—indeed, I would assert that at present we can be said to have both of these: the Communist régimes and the free world understand their profound mutual incompatibility, while refraining from resolving this incompatibility by force of arms.]

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BOOKS

THE DISTEMPER OF THE AGE

THIS is a book* of great merit, great utility that, at the same time, will irritate many who are in general agreement with its argument and will not convert some who might have been induced to enter the right path by less violent polemical methods. Mr. Kronenberger, the distinguished American drama critic, is perplexed and worried by the problem that perplexes and worries most intellectuals regarding the contemporary world. Are our traditional standards of culture, our traditional scale of values, our traditional rules of discrimination not so much wrong as totally irrelevant to the problems of cultural ascent or decline in the present world of the West? Have our real fears and faint hopes any meaning for that younger generation which people who came to manhood in the twenties feel, not so much knocking on the door or treading on their heels, as shooting past in jeeps or jet planes to an unknown but, to us, almost certainly unpleasant and unworthy destination? Are our fears simply a sign of hardening of the arteries, are we old fogies, old fuddy-duddies, or is there a change in the climate of opinion and in the results of that change in contemporary life that calls for analysis and what Professor Perry Miller calls a "jeremiad"?

Mr. Kronenberger has little doubt. There *has* been a deterioration that will (I think he feels) get worse before it gets better and won't get better if we fail to notice and proclaim that it is getting worse. "The spirit of the age," most decidedly, doesn't please him and he makes no bones about saying so, even if it involves criticising youth, the sacred cow of American life. I don't mind criticising youth. "We are none of us infallible, not even the youngest of us," as a famous master of Trinity College (Cambridge) remarked. And it would be novel and disconcerting to find that *les jeunes* were like us, either what we are or what we were.

Then Mr. Kronenberger, without believing that the evils he sees and resents in America are confined to America, believes that they are more rampant and more dangerous there than in Europe (specifically in England). It is the world of American conformism (and anti-conformism) that worries him and he very shrewdly makes distinctions between the English cult of "what is done" (a limited convention) and the American cult of good fellowship, of amenability, of "mixing" which involves a constant adjustment to a society whose members are continually adjusting themselves to each other in pursuit of a sterile unity of spirit and conduct. The Englishman, with his unrolled umbrella on a sunny day, has, by carrying that symbol, bought an immunity from other conformities that an American, in play clothes on a sunny day, cannot hope to buy by so simple a ritual gesture. So that while it is a general sickness of the contemporary world that is attacked, it is most virulent in America and, in any case, America is the chief seat of infection and contagion.

* *Company Manners. A Cultural Enquiry into American Life.* By LOUIS KRONENBERGER. Bobbs-Merrill. $3 (USA).

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What is this disease? It is not only conformity but a conformity to a second-hand experience. No one is allowed or encouraged to have first-hand experience of the arts; they are mediated to him through standard criticism, popularisation, and a debasement of standards that can lead the unwary (here the young who know no better are especially vulnerable) to accepting second-rate stuff as first-rate so that, between the digests of masterpieces and the puffing of trade successes as masterpieces, the youth of the day, assailed as they are by so many temptations to mechanical enjoyment and to mere passive acceptance of æsthetic experience, are becoming, in a deep sense, illiterate (and blind and deaf).

WITH much of this, most of us will be in agreement. We are more or less disillusioned with the results of mass culture, or with the kind of culture that the masses want. We may, of course, blame the purveyors of that mass culture for corrupting the popular taste, but we fear that they do not only create it, they pander to it. Shallow calls to shallow and it is rude, undemocratic, uncivil to note that the common man *has* common tastes (in the derogatory sense) and that the distinction between the really good and the plausibly good is ignored and, if this ignoring is insisted on, the retort is a charge of *incivisme*, of preciousness. We may be better off than was the unfortunate M. Aragon when he printed Picasso's drawing of Stalin, only to discover that the party *militants* really believed in "socialist realism," that Picasso was a mascot and no more. We may be better off, but we are not much better off. We neglect the truth that the best things in life are free or dear; they are never cheap.

This is one of Mr. Kronenberger's main charges and it is illuminated for him and, through him for us, by his long experience as a dramatic critic. Illuminated but also, I suggest, distorted. A dramatic critic is peculiarly exposed to the more depressing side of modern culture. A book reviewer can avoid reviewing some books at all; their titles, the names of the authors, often enough of the publishers, are enough. But a dramatic critic is chained to his galley. He has to go and sample *Abie's Irish Rose* one night and *The Playboy of the Western*

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LONGMANS

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World another. Then, the stage is a mixed art. There is the author, the producer, the director, the actors—and the audience. (Mr. Kronenberger is especially good, vicious, and convincing when he deals with the role of the first-night audience that comes to be seen and heard, not to see and hear.) Then a dramatic critic is continually being reminded of what the standards of the stage ought to be. He may have to "cover," one night, some childish strawberry sundæ entertainment and, next night, a good revival of *Hamlet*. He may also have to cover a bad revival of *Hamlet*, a production that makes of the play a "stellar vehicle." Altogether he has a bad time and, as H. G. Wells, Shaw, and others have pointed out, it's a killing job. It didn't kill Mr. Kronenberger, but it embittered him. I don't say that it shouldn't have embittered him, but a reader should remember that here is a man that has gone through hell, as they said of Dante. But, seriously, the stage and the critic of the stage are special cases of the problem. Something must be allowed for that.

Given this special and harrowing experience, what has Mr. Kronenberger to say? He has one thing of great utility to say and he says it admirably and not with excessive force. We are witnesses of a genuine abdication of critical standards on the stage (and not only on the stage). Some of this decline is due to a general decline in standards, a general denial that there *are* standards. But there is a special American version of this decline of standards that Mr. Kronenberger notes but does not, I think, explain in terms that come naturally to a European. He notes the gross exaggeration of the merits of competent commercial productions like those of the Rodgers and Hammerstein team. He notes the exaggerated role of a theatrical manipulator like Mr. Joshua Logan. London and Paris are not without representatives of these types. But not only are our versions of them not so competent; they lack one great asset of the American smart maker or producer of shows: the successful building-up, over quite a long time now, of a patriotic pride in what America can do well. It is not confined to the stage. Mr. Marcus Cunliffe, in his recent admirable book on the *Literature of the United States*, has discussed the inflation of competent evocative verse to the rank of poetry. The old quest for "the great American novel" has been replaced by the seeking and finding of a series of great American plays and a series of great American musicals. Mr. Kronenberger notes the difference between Rodgers and Hart and Rodgers and Hammerstein and doesn't like the change. But the change is towards a middlebrow message in favour of "democracy," true "Americanism" and the like which is, I think, one reason for the success of the team. Sometimes it is, for non-Americans, what the English used to call "off-putting." Like Mr. Kronenberger, I found the almost hysterical praise of *South Pacific* rather hard to take. But when I remarked in a lecture or a class at Harvard that it was absurd to praise this quite agreeable show as if it were *Le Nozze di Figaro* or even *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, I was accosted by a very large young man in Harvard Square with the menacing words: "So you don't like *South Pacific*?" I feebly replied that I had merely said that I didn't think that it was in the same class as *Le Nozze di Figaro*. I was allowed to move on, with a hurt and sulky glance.

The instances could be multiplied. And the natural and, in itself, harmless attempt to create an American culture that has marked American life in the last twenty years, the gallant effort of the highbrows to be broad-minded and democratic in their tastes, has led to this kind of inflation. On the other hand, English and French audiences lap up these musicals, even if they do not get the peculiar "message" that the plays are supposed to carry. I doubt, that is to say, whether the theatre-goer, in Paris or London, is much more greedy for masterpieces than is the New York theatre-goer. I have seen French people, not of the officially cultivated classes, as baffled and irritated by *Partage de Midi* as their opposite numbers would have been in London or New York. Mr. Kronenberger may reply that this is natural, that what is unnatural is that the educated classes in New York should be so complacently philistine. It is possible that Mr. Kronenberger has something there, as they put it in the vernacular. I think he has. For there still remain in Europe the remnants of an old hierarchical culture, the republic of letters had its gradations. Often, that traditional culture was and still more is sterile. We do not look for the living French writers to the Académie Française (although it contains a few) any more than we look to the Royal Academy for the good British painters (though it contains one or

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two). But the mere fact that such institutions still have a possibly undeserved prestige does help, I think, to moderate the raptures with which mere successes are received. They may run as long in Paris or London as in New York, but there are fewer illusions about the meaning of the run. *Oklahoma* had and deserved to have a great success in London, but as far as there was critical comparison at all, it was with Gilbert and Sullivan and not with Mozart-Da Ponte.

THAT we have got to watch our standards; that there are more ways than one of falling for a systematised second-rate imitation of the first-rate is true. We may laugh at M. Aragon's misadventures, but we had better also look out for ourselves. But I am less alarmed than is Mr. Kronenberger about the effect on critical taste of these puffed-up shows and less afraid of such predigested versions of first-rate works as the film version of *Henry V* (which is oddly chalked up against Hollywood) or *Julius Cæsar*. As long as people don't think that Mr. Brando knows how to recite Shakespeare, no great harm is done. Maybe, to recall a celebrated anecdote from Mr. Kronenberger's favourite eighteenth century, we should imitate Bentley telling Pope that his translation was "a very pretty poem but you must not call it Homer." But I doubt if Pope's "Homer" did much harm to the real Homer and I can't get adequately upset by Hollywood or Elstree Shakespeare. We have no real reason to believe that a mass culture has ever been highly critical. As long as we try to keep our own, old standards (risking, if any risk is to be taken, more enthusiasm than new work may, in the long run, turn out to deserve), but avoiding the mischief of mixing levels of achievement, overestimating entertainers like Rodgers and Hammerstein (or Trollope to cite another though less extravagant case of overvaluation), the battle is not lost.

It is more likely to be lost if Mr. Kronenberger's fears for "manners," in the widest sense, are justified. Here again, it is necessary to distinguish. For him the twenties (with all their faults) were not so boring, sterile, conformist, timid as are the fifties. I greatly admire Mr. Kronenberger's vigour and vim in attack and his picture of café society, of the world of TV artist, producer, of the customers of the interior decorators, of an even more transient "aristocracy" than that of the old Fifth Avenue and Newport is highly entertaining and, as far as I can judge, not notably unjust. In any case, Mr. Kronenberger has adopted Belloc's motto:

Caritas non conturbat me.

But some of this praise of the dear dead days of the twenties may be just the old story:

Dove sono i bei momenti?

I think some of it is. But it may be that conformity *has* gone further in America than in England or France and that the McKinley ideal of "the man without an angle or a tangle" is dominant. I hope not, though this ideal is certainly prevalent and the art of "mixing" is as much the key to success as the art of slugging it out was when the robber barons were making their way in the world. We, again, must watch out that we do not encourage mere conformity, not only intellectual conformity, literary, or artistic acceptance of a planned role. I think most "intellectuals" do watch out for that, and

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if they fail to be sufficiently vigilant, it may be because there is imposed on us by the situation a degree, not of conformity, but of common judgement that produces formally the same result. Mr. Kronenberger has argued so well against "group revolts no less than group conformities," that he would not want us, I am sure, to cast a minority vote by word or deed simply for the sake of showing that we are not slaves of convention. In the aristocratic culture which Mr. Kronenberger wants to save, the member in good standing could afford to say "yes" as well as "no," as long as he meant it, as long as his assent or dissent was not merely a social gesture, but represented something more interior, more a product of his whole view of life.

How is this aristocratic culture to be preserved in what is inevitably a more and more egalitarian society? That is another story into which Mr. Kronenberger hardly enters (apart from some sensible suggestions about the theatre whose practicability I am not competent to judge). What he has done is to point out to us the slipperiness of the slope on which we are standing or sliding and suggest to each of us that we needn't slide if we don't want to and understand why we shouldn't. For Mr. Kronenberger is, in a double sense, a moralist, in the French sense and the English, and his final morality is, I think, that mere peace of mind or adjustment to the environment is not an aim worthy of an adult, free, and civilised man.

D. W. Brogan

A DRUGSTORE FOR THE SOUL?

THERE must be many people for whom Mr. Huxley's familiar style already has the charm of its period; it brings with it the memory of a first reading of *Crome Yellow* and of the early poems of T. S. Eliot . . . "Vuillard, the painter, at his best, of unforgettably splendid pictures of the Dharma-Body manifested in a bourgeois bedroom, of the Absolute blazing away in the midst of some stockbroker's family in a suburban garden, taking tea"—and then follows a quotation from Laurent Taillade on "the retired rubber goods merchant." Presented with this fragment, any literary historian would be twenty-five years out in his dating. It is a great pleasure to find Mr. Huxley still freely speculating and moralising; for he is almost the only living English writer who still takes pleasure in pursuing ideas for their own sake.

The subject of this essay*—sixty pages only—is mescalin intoxication. Mr. Huxley has been intoxicated for one afternoon in California, and describes the enrichment of experience which mescalin brings. It is an enrichment particularly of visual experience, and one may enjoy the pleasures of detachment and of self-transcendence; the busy ego lies quiet and still for a time, as Mr. Huxley has always wished that it should. Colours and shapes blaze with a new significance, and for some nine hours one may share, and even excel, a great painter's vision of the significance of material things. A mysticism of the concrete object makes every second-hand and practical experience seem trivial and unwanted; existence becomes its own mystery, and in his peyotl trance the new mescalin man is content merely to be and to see. Mescalin is only the synthetic form of an ancient and harmless drug, which has been happily chewed in Mexico and elsewhere for thousands of years. Mr. Huxley has always looked for ancient wisdom in a harmless and synthetic form, for the pill or physical jerks that will make one as wise as Buddha, and with no sacrifice of the intellect. With the tape recorder at his elbow, he now finds that he can lose his head and yet keep it at the same time. The remorseless cerebration need not stop as he passes in and out of the mystic's world, serene in California, with the World's Greatest Drugstore always close at hand. Parodies suggest themselves to the reader. In that bright land of syncretism, might there not be a Drugstore for the Soul, built in Indian or Aztec style, supplying the wisdoms of the East

* *The Doors of Perception.* By ALDOUS HUXLEY. Chatto and Windus. 6s.

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in the new synthetic forms, the spiritual antibiotics which will destroy any streptococcus of egotism, if taken three times a week? Alcohol is only the soul's old-fashioned tonic, tobacco a mild syrup; we can do better with the new sulphonamides for the soul, now that the old moulds of religion can be happily synthetised. The Universities should co-operate, and abandon their dreary book-learning. One might even have a World Medical Research Council for the Soul, so that the density of egotism can be everywhere carefully correlated with the effects of synthetic Zen. What is wrong? Why do Mr. Huxley's arguments always suggest some parody of themselves?

I THINK it is because of a single strand which runs through all his writing, novels and criticism alike: a total disregard of the freedom of the will. Religion, art, and love occur in his work either as symptoms or as cures of diseases of the soul. Omit from religion the free act of positive belief: then a religion becomes something to be administered to the uneasy patient in safe and clinical doses, or it is to be treated as the varying expression of psychological needs. Omit from art the mind's own act of construction, and one may compare and prefer a mescalin vision of one's trousers to a Cézanne or a Seurat. Omit from love any freedom of will and of thought in relations between persons, and it becomes one more helpless obsession in the various pathology of the soul. The marionettes may be made to bob and turn in response to these three external strings, which are so closely intertwined; and one may wish to wheel them into a repair-shop to adjust the strings, when their joints are not moving easily.

It seems to me that the argument at the end of this essay is largely vitiated by its deterministic assumptions. Mr. Huxley finds the æsthetic enjoyment of a Cézanne poor in comparison with his mescalin visions. But surely the enjoyment of mescalin vision is a passive enjoyment, and the enjoyment of a Cézanne is not. There is an old ambiguity in the phrase "æsthetic enjoyment"; it may mean a sensuous pleasure of perception, or it may mean the full enjoyment of a work of human art. Looking at painting and listening to music, one has to follow the work and to retrace in one's mind the elements of the artist's construction. In the case of hearing music, this is obvious. But it

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seems no less true of the visual arts; equally a man is working in a medium and it is his conception and execution one sees. And surely part of the value of æsthetic enjoyment, in this second sense, comes from seeing the nature of the achievement, and from the admiration or wonder which such a perception brings. A painting is not just one more beautiful object to be set alongside others which, with mescalin, one may happen to find in nature; the point of it lies in the fact and manner of its construction, and in the quality of the original conception when this is fully worked out in the medium. And it is for this reason that mescalin visions, however beautiful and interesting in themselves, seem comparatively unimportant, accidents only of natural history; they have none of the human significance of art, as mystical visions induced by drugs have none of the religious significance of mysticism. Mr. Huxley is a 19th century naturalist who observes with delight the brilliant variety of human molluscs to be found floating in the rock-pools of history. He can therefore easily ignore men in discussing art, and God in discussing religion.

However much one may dissent from his philosophy, the brilliance of the descriptions and the freedom of his argument are irresistibly impressive. Very few living writers are so clear, so liberal, so inquisitive, and so disinclined to apologise for any of the curiosities which inspire him. This essay is a return to his earlier manner, and arouses once again the old gratitude for the pleasure and intellectual ease which he somehow brought from France into England in the years between the wars.

Stuart Hampshire

CHAIRMAN OF A REVOLUTION

THE essence of Mr. Attlee's story* can almost be gathered from his chapter-headings. "Social Work and Politics"—it was not through deductive reasoning or daring imagination, but through his work in East London Boys' Clubs, that he first came to the Independent Labour Party of 1907 whose principles added up to "a characteristically British interpretation of Socialism, a way of life rather than an economic dogma." Or again, "Marriage and Parliament"—it is in almost the same tone of dignified understatement that Mr. Attlee relates how he was in 1921 accepted by Miss Violet Millar as husband ("We arranged to be married in January, but the housing situation was acute") and in 1922 by the Limehouse constituency as Labour Member of Parliament. Or again, "Labour and Defence" —"It is, I think, fair to say that until 1935 the Parliamentary Labour Party had given little serious attention to problems of defence": one almost feels that so pacific a person as Mr. Attlee should *not* have had to think about defence.

Still, during Mr. Attlee's tenure as Prime Minister a British social revolution was actually carried out: a bloodless revolution, of course, effected through taxation and social insurance, but a revolution nevertheless, doing away with the extremes of poverty and luxury in Britain. It would be hard to think that this revolution could have taken place under more suitable leadership—or, better said, chairmanship.

Clement Attlee was born in 1883, as fourth son and seventh child of a City of London solicitor "of highest standing." His childhood was spent in the outer London suburb of Putney, in "a roomy house with a good-sized garden in quiet, leafy Portinscale Road." The atmosphere was that of a typical late-Victorian family of the professional class. A governess to Clement's sisters had previously been employed by Lord Randolph Churchill to teach his determined little boy, Winston. ("She could never have thought that the two little boys were destined in turn to be Prime Minister.") Like all his brothers, Clement Attlee went from Putney to Haileybury College, a middle-class Public School of which his father was a Governor; from there in 1901 to Oxford; "My tutor thought I might get a First in 'schools,' but in the event I got a second, with which I was quite content."

* *As it Happened.* By C. R. ATTLEE, O.M., C.H. Heinemann. 16s.

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Next, in what seemed a routine life, Bar exams in London, being called to the Bar, work in Chambers, and then what Mr. Attlee calls the decisive event in his life, when in 1905 he went to visit the Haileybury Boys' Club in Stepney, then part of darkest East London.

It is characteristic of his reticence that he hardly mentions his reaction to the grim poverty and injustices he found in the East End, even though these decisive feelings led him to the secretaryship of the Haileybury Boys' Club, to fourteen years' residence in the East End, to contact with the Webbs and other Fabians, to politics and the I.L.P. War in 1914 brought interruption. Mr. Attlee saw four years' war service, including the Gallipoli campaign, laconically described ("I recall the heat and the flies, and later the frost and the snow"), the Western front, sickness, and wounds. In 1922, as Major Attlee, Limehouse sent him to Westminster, where he has remained these thirty-two years. In 1935, surrounded by intrigues of which he again says characteristically little, he was elected Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Two years later, as he says, "Family expenses were mounting, and it was a relief when in 1937 the Ministers of the Crown Act provided a salary of £2,000 a year for the Leader of the Opposition." Halfway through his book Mr. Attlee describes how he found himself, in 1940, Deputy Premier in Britain's Finest Hour.

The domestic achievements of the 1945–50 Labour Government are treated briefly, almost as though Mr. Attlee feels they can already be taken as read—perhaps in the Minutes. A sketchy foreign affairs review brings Mr. Attlee to the 1950's, to prosaic and yet sad and gentle obituary comments on Cripps and Bevin; to a change from Premiership to leadership of the Opposition which seemed less a fall from power than a mere change of office; and to a slightly lonely eminence at the 1953 Coronation—"I think that except for the Duke of Norfolk I was the only person still holding the same office as at the Coronation in 1937." Lastly, in a warm concluding paragraph, he gives thanks for a happy family life, for the chance to live in the greatest country in the world, and to serve "in a state of life to which I had never expected to be called."

THERE is a curious optical illusion about *As it Happened*. If so many of the events described had not been enacted on the world stage, one could read it almost as the memoirs of a pleasant, elderly Englishman of the professional class, and no more. How, one wonders, did Mr. Attlee rise to his eminence? No man, Disraeli said once, enters politics out of sheer diffidence, and not even Mr. Attlee is an exception. Integrity is not enough. To govern the unruly Labour Party, he must have had his share of determination, of occasional ruthlessness, probably even of political slyness. But if he had such qualities, few readers will glimpse them in *As it Happened*. Despite an occasional venture into dry wit, Mr. Attlee as writer has a way of lapsing into mild clichés or blandly passing over problematic issues. Thus, in wartime India, "A number of Indians, including Nehru, were kept in gaol; law and order had to be preserved." But on Burma's decision to leave the Commonwealth he writes: "In accordance with our principles, we had no option but to grant this request." No doubt good reasons impelled Mr. Attlee in the one case to uphold law and order, to yield on principle in the other: but he seems quite

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content to leave them to the reader's imagination.

In other words, to the extent that Mr. Attlee is a reticent, inarticulate Englishman who might find it genuinely difficult to explain his transformation from Major Attlee of the First World War to British Prime Minister at the end of the Second, *As it Happened* mirrors his personality exactly. And yet, in its very inarticulateness, it is an important book, about which two special points should be made.

I recall an international conference some time after the war where a well-known French Socialist was lamenting the lack of any positive faith which he and his friends could hold out to the cynical post-war youth of France. In Britain, I said, such a problem did not as yet exist. What, then, did British youth believe in? Giving the first answer that came to my mind, I said: "I imagine they believe in what Mr. Attlee is always calling 'Our Way of Life'."

There are, indeed, continuous explicit and implicit references to this "British way of life" in Mr. Attlee's book, and here one probably touches on some explanation of his surprising career. If for twenty years he could preside over the British Labour Party with its uneasy mixture of stolid trade-unionists, socialist intellectuals, and emotional pacifists, this was because of his ability to fuse Labour policy with his own outlook, which is that of a plain, patriotic, middle-class Englishman who took such things as war service, or the respectable middle-class virtues, or the rejection of government by force, simply for granted. As such a person, Mr. Attlee did not like intellectuals. As early as 1907 he found H. G. Wells in the Fabian Society "speaking with a piping little voice, very unimpressive"; Cripps, challenging the Party leadership in 1935, was "relying on the advice of irresponsible people"; Harold Laski, seeking to lay down Socialist directives in 1945, seemed both irritating and irrelevant. This rejection of ideas has its negative side. Nevertheless, when one recalls how often socialist parties on the Continent were weakened because their ideology and rhetoric cut them off from the deep-rooted national sentiment of their fellow-citizens, one realises how in this respect Mr. Attlee performed a most difficult and important piece of political alchemy.

THE second point is this. While Leader of the Opposition in the Coronation year of 1937, Mr. Attlee wrote a short book called *The Labour Party in Perspective*. In this treatise he set out the programme a future Labour Government in office should carry out. "In 1945," he now says, "I had the pleasure of seeing this programme performed." Now this is one remark in *As it Happened* that seems to go a little far; but still, if Mr. Attlee in his early days as social worker in the East End had been asked about the political goal for which he worked, he would probably have answered in terms of social welfare and described those very reforms—in the way of state-organised health, housing, and social insurance services—that were carried out by the Labour Government, with self-government for India and other colonial territories thrown in. All this, it may be objected, does not add up to Socialism. Perhaps it doesn't; but it is important to realise that the radical socialist programmes which the Oxford intellectuals, hovering on the outskirts of the Party, have always been drawing up were really paper programmes for themselves, having little to do with the Labour Party. Mr. Attlee's desires for specific social reforms on

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the other hand not only fitted the Labour Movement: they represented the aspirations which the bulk of Labour Party members were ready to accept, as opposed to the slogans they applauded at meetings.

As it Happened is therefore a book of some importance. It represents what the Labour Party has really stood for—the reality of a solid, pragmatic British political party beneath the deceptive superstructure of international socialist theories.

Except, of course, that history does not stand still, and new problems for Labour have already come crowding in. Now that the earnings of many formerly militant workers are well above the national average, how shall the Labour Movement keep its momentum? How solve colonial problems where, as in South and East Africa, a racial clash is involved and a British Government cannot merely hand over power, as was done in India, Burma, or Ceylon? How adjust British policy to the harsh rivalries of the atomic age? On such questions Mr. Attlee has little to say. Indeed, not long ago he confessed in a speech that, as he contemplated the present levelled British society with the new welfare services existing side by side with mass demands for tabloid newspapers, Hollywood films, television, racing, betting, pools and all the rest, he felt that he no longer knew what people really wanted. This makes *As it Happened* already something of a period piece, a book covering an epoch which ended in, say, 1948, when the Labour Government had enacted its main measures of social reform—and then the epoch ended, rather abruptly.

T. R. Fyvel

DIGGING FOR LITERARY TREASURES

Was it through mere poetic fancy that Shakespeare put a lion in the forest of Arden, or was it in obedience to a convention that goes back to Ovid, and to the Bible, a convention which insisted that the wilds even of northern Europe must have their lions, just as the northern landscape had to have its olives and its palms? Did Shakespeare's Globe Theatre display the motto "*Totus mundus agit histrionem*" because someone had read in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* the words "*Totus mundus exerceat histrionem*"? Do public speakers begin, "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking" because affected modesty was a formula or *topos* well known to Cicero and to later Latin treatises on rhetoric? Does anybody ever think of anything for the first time? Such are some of the questions posed by Dr. Curtius' monumental and encyclopædic book.*

Dr. Curtius has long been a well-known scholar, a humanist in the true line of descent from Lessing and from Goethe, liberal, anti-Nazi, an authority on many literatures, as familiar with Calderón and Góngora as with Balzac and Mallarmé, with Sir Thomas Browne and James Joyce as with Hofmannsthal or Stephan George. He had translated *The Waste Land* into German as early as 1927. But his studies of modern literature drove him back increasingly to the sources of its recurring themes, motifs, and forms. He found it necessary to make himself a medievalist and at the same time a classicist. The process took fifteen years of intensive work; and he is now perhaps the most polymathic of living authors.

Although Dr. Curtius often finds occasion to go back to Homer or to Hesiod, or forward to Goethe or to Blake, the great tumulus which he is mainly concerned to excavate is what might be called Romanesque literature, the later Latin writers from the age of the Church Fathers to the 12th century Renaissance. He has unearthed quite unexpected treasures in Martianus Capella's catalogue of the liberal arts (*circa* A.D. 420), in Isidore of Seville's encyclopædia (*circa* 610), in the cosmological epics of Bernard Silvestris (*circa* 1150) and of Alan of Lille (*circa* 1180). He throws light not only on what Virgil and Ovid signified to medieval men but on what the Middle Ages got from Lucan and Statius, from Claudian and Boethius, and from many another writer

* *European Literature and The Latin Middle Ages.* By Ernest Robert Curtius. Translated by W. R. Trask. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 35s.

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of the "Silver Age." He is excellent on why "Rhetoric" mattered so much in this Romanesque world and on what it meant. He is illuminating in untangling strands in Dante's immense erudition, some of them hitherto overlooked in spite of the enormous literature of Dante scholarship.

It must be admitted that Dr. Curtius' book is likely to become one of those works which are studied more for their fascinating details and for their footnotes than for their main themes or theories—like Sir James Frazer's or (dare one say it?) like Professor Arnold Toynbee's. The main stream sometimes runs underground, as it does when forty-six pages are devoted to tracing the history of the use of "the book" as a metaphor or symbol. Sometimes the stream is hidden by a somewhat Germanic mist of grandiose or over-abstract phraseology. There is a certain amount about such things as "historism" or "phenomenology".

But the stream is there all the time. Dr. Curtius claims to be making discoveries in what he calls "philology," but he is not using the word in the normal English sense. What he has done is to trace the genealogy or diffusion, not exactly of ideas but of certain literary tropes, clichés, or conventions and of the changes that have been rung upon them. There is, for example, a fascinating account of what the Muses have meant in all the different ages, of all the different dresses in which the Muses have shown themselves to poets, from the flimsy, diaphanous, shapeless robes of Homer's muses to the neat Puritan homespun of Milton's "*heavenly* muse." They seem to have got into and out of blue stockings several times.

DR. CURTIUS does not make wholly clear what he thinks is the real mechanism of the diffusions and transmissions he describes. At times he seems to imply that the poets are quite consciously copying and quoting from their predecessors, as Mr. Eliot does many times in *The Waste Land* or as Shakespeare does when he makes Phoebe exclaim:

"Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might:
'Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?'"—

to add two further samples to Dr. Curtius' catalogue. In other places, however, Dr. Curtius implies that the poet may be in touch with universal, archetypal symbols belonging to a Jungian communal unconscious, that the poets think of the same symbols because they are the common inheritance of all mankind.

Admittedly almost all the poets with whom Dr. Curtius deals were conscious traditionalists; and their copyings, imitations and quotations were fully deliberate variations on well-established and well-worn themes. Almost all medieval poetry is "classical" and conventional in the highest degree, both as regards form and as regards matter. In interpreting this kind of poem, writes Dr. Curtius, "we must ask not on what 'experience' it was based, but what theme the poet set himself to treat. This is especially distasteful to the modern critic when he has to criticise poems on spring or nightingales or swallows. Yet those very themes were prescribed by rhetoric." One almost regrets that Dr. Curtius does not refer to Welsh medieval poetry—perhaps the most stylised and formal poetry ever known. Some of the most interesting passages in the book are

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those which trace the evolution of, for instance, the pastoral convention, or of such tropes as "the world turned upside down" or, again, of the stock "ideal landscape" with its exotic but highly conventional fauna and flora. The landscape has numerous forms, all equally stylised, such as "the pleasaunce" and "the grove"—not to mention "the mixed forest" which began (with Ovid) by having twenty-six varieties of tree but, when it had been pruned by Statius, Claudian, Nonnus, and others, came (with Joseph of Exeter, *circa* 1200) to boast a mere ten.

Occasionally, however, a link or two seems to be missing in Dr. Curtius' genealogical chains. We are shown, as it were, a basement and an attic and are left to assume that there must have been a staircase. It is difficult to believe that Dr. Curtius is not overstating the case when he seems to suggest that Spring has been celebrated by poets only because the books of rhetoric said that it was a season whose praises might be sung; or that a poet writes lines to his mistress' eyebrow only because earlier poets have made it a proper thing to do. We are not far here from the suggestion that no one would ever fall in love if he had never read about it in a book; although it is true that books and conventions have at different times had much say in determining that men should fall romantically in love with boys, or with virgins, or with other people's wives.

DR. CURTIUS' techniques and criteria equip him admirably for dealing with elaborately conscious literature—as most Latin literature, whether ancient or medieval, certainly was. He is less sure-footed when he treats of the poetry that wells more immediately from the subconscious. It is, after all, the *unconscious* imagery in Shakespeare that really matters. Conscious symbolism is always something of a bore. It ruins Ibsen's *Wild Duck*. It almost ruins some of Dante and much of Spenser. There may be some significance in the fact that Dr. Curtius is superb on Dante but has nothing very interesting to say of Shakespeare—though we do get eight pages on Shakespeare's use of "the book-image," for what it is worth.

At the end of his book Dr. Curtius shows, disarmingly, that he himself is much more than half aware of all this. He laments the long cult of Quintilian and of the rules of rhetoric, and he regrets the neglect, until the 18th century, of Longinus on the Sublime. He sees that Longinus had his finger on the real clue to poetry and knew that it was not just a matter of rule of thumb or of copying the best models. But Dr. Curtius has trained himself so long to look for the conventions and the *topoi* that occasionally he misses the sublime when it does occur in medieval Latin. He pays generous tribute to the *Dies Irae* but his interest in the hymns of Fortunatus appears to be solely metrical. And nothing is said of the apparently genuine sexual passion that sometimes breaks through the conventions in certain medieval Latin lyrics, for instance in some of the *Carmina Burana*. He does not mention the enchanting "*Dum Diane vitrea*." Indeed, more than once, the real poetry somehow seems to have got squeezed dry or even squeezed out altogether by all the "philology," "morphology," and "phenomenology."

And yet "philology" is sometimes Dr. Curtius' saving grace. The sheer pedantry of it saves him from over-indulgence in his Germanic love of generalisation, and saves him also from the "waffle" which he finds, though he does not use the word, in most historians of art. It has led him to undertake highly rewarding researches into the origins and shifts of meaning attached to certain words—words like "classical" or "modern" or "heroic."

Whether or not we accept the validity of Dr. Curtius' method and of the results he claims for it, we cannot be ungrateful for the mass of diverting miscellaneous information he lets fall by the way. We are told, for instance, of the legend related by John of Salisbury that Plato died from chagrin at being unable to answer a simple question asked him by some sailors; or of the 18th century antiquarian, David Ruhnken, who "with Arrian's account of the Celts as his authority, pursued game with only a net, bow and arrows"; or that in Isidore of Seville's etymology man is alleged to have been called "*homo*" because he was made of "*humus*"; that the Greeks played a game in which the participants had to think of cities beginning with the same letter; that Nestor of Laranda (*circa* A.D. 200) "wrote an Iliad in each book of which one letter of the alphabet did not appear," while Hucbald (*circa* 900) dedicated to Charles the Bald an

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eclogue on baldness consisting of 146 lines in which every word began with C.

Many of Dr. Curtius' extravagations are of more serious interest—he is admirable for instance on Saint Jerome's work in getting the Bible accepted as a piece of "literature" or on how Saint Augustine began the allegorical interpretation of scripture which was to lead in due course to the allegorical interpretation of Homer and of Virgil. On allegory in general Dr. Curtius is excellent, although he might with profit have made some use of Mr. C. S. Lewis' most reputable book, *The Allegory of Love*. (It seems almost an impertinence to suggest that there is any book which Dr. Curtius may not have read.) Dr. Curtius has many things that are interesting and some that are new to say about the early relationship between poetry and prose. He is illuminating on the growth of the idea that culture meant book-learning, the written rather than the spoken word—he finds it in the Hellenistic but not in the Hellenic age. To his learning there seems indeed to be no end. He even has a digression on Mr. Eliot's friend the Fisher King, another on medieval homosexual lyrics, and another on Balzac's use of the apocryphal *Shepherd of Hermas*.

On purely literary themes Dr. Curtius is omniscient and highly professional. But he shows a touch of amateurishness when he tries his hand at painting the historical, sociological background. He is, for instance, not wholly clear nor wholly convincing when he attempts to explain why Germany, which was culturally ahead of France in the Ottonian period, lost her lead and never had a 12th century Renaissance. The same might be said of Dr. Curtius' explanation of why France had a vernacular literature before Italy. Even if the French feudal aristocracy became to some extent demilitarised and found itself with time on its hands, this hardly seems a sufficient reason for its taking to reading French books and poems. It might just as well have learnt some Latin. In any case, the Italian aristocracy had long been less military and less feudal in character than the French. That the cultural and sociological history of the Middle Ages *can* be successfully combined we know from a recent and admirable book, Mr. R. W. Southern's *The Making of the Middle Ages*.

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Yet for all the doubts which it may occasionally arouse, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* remains if not quite a great book at least a very important one. It will long be read by all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons, and not only for its *recherché* information. For it has unveiled a largely undiscovered world, the world of late Latin literature.

Of course, learned works have been written on late Latin literature—Dr. Raby's volumes are an outstanding example—but it is doubtful whether the relationship between later Latin and the whole literary tradition of Western Europe has been so thoroughly explored before. Besides, most of the scholars who can and do read medieval Latin have confined their attentions either to the Chronicles or to the Scholastic philosophers. Dr. Curtius has shown us that there is also a late Latin *literature* of very serious interest, even if not always of serious merit. It is a literature which at least throws light on the extraordinary divagations and syncretisms of which the human intellect is sometimes capable. After reading Dr. Curtius, the reader may even wish to open the bizarre poems of Bernard Silvestris, called *Megacosmus* and *Microcosmus*; for the reader knows that in them he will find strange catalogues of animals, including "the lynx whose urine hardens into a gem" and a fish "which makes old men fit for Venus' wars again." He will find also the strange primeval vision of Noys ("a feminine emanation of the Godhead" and a very highbrow one at that, for she is really *Nous*), wherein she sees a procession of the world's future heroes and "exemplary figures." The preponderance of pagans is startling. They are Phoroneus the first king of Greece, the Theban brothers, Phaeton, Deucalion, Codrus, Croesus, Paris, Hippolytus, Priam, Turnus, Ulysses, Hercules, Pollux, Tiphys, Cicero, Thales, Virgil, Myron, Plato, Achilles, Nero, Titus, the Virgin Mary, and Pope Eugenius III. If the reader is suitably frivolous he may find himself singing that entrancing stanza from *The Groves of Blarney*:

"There's statues gracing this noble place in,
All Heathen goddesses so fair;
Bold Neptune, Plutarch and Nicodemus,
All standing naked in the open air."

Christopher Morris

TRANSFORMATIONS OF EROS

THE title of the first of these books* might well have been "Sex in Christendom." True, there are glances at Greeks and Romans, at Mithraism, witchcraft and local religious cults as they survived in the face of, were absorbed into, or came to blows with Christianity, but all these are used to light up the central theme, which is not just a history of sexual behaviour in Western Europe, but an attempt to explain religious and social developments in terms of the underlying, unending sexual conflict. The approach is functional, psychoanalytical. It investigates from below. Mr. Watts' approach is the opposite. His treatment is sublimatory, eclectic, comparative. More or less explicitly he rejects the underneath view altogether. Christianity must not be turned upside down. It should be viewed soaringly, from the enlightened foothills of Buddhism and Kundalini Yoga.

I do not think it is prejudice in favour of Mr. Taylor's kind of approach which makes me think his the more valuable book of the two. Both belong to a series—of the "Library of Modern Knowledge" type—in which an accepted expert gives a qualified survey of his ethnological, social, religious, scientific, or mythological theme. Not only do all the adjectives apply to Mr. Taylor's survey; he has the advantage of a subject which has never been treated as a whole before, whereas Mr. Watts is weighted down with tradition. He tries to solve his problem by sinking bibliography into a few footnotes, and writing his book on the pattern of a devotional meditation on the Christian Mystery. With of course a difference. For the gist is devotional only from a non-orthodox, a quasi-yogi point of view. Wilfully rejecting any difference between facts of mythical significance and myths which have

* *Sex in History*. By G. RATTRAY TAYLOR. Thames and Hudson. 21s.

Myth and Ritual in Christianity. By ALAN W. WATTS. Thames and Hudson, 25s.

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no factual basis, his meditation flows in a riverine way from Adam and Eve, the hierarchies of God and Satan, through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany to the Passion, and the Four Last Things. Arrived at the fixed and frozen duality of the ultimate Christian concepts of Heaven and Hell, in which the total mutual exclusion of the two extremes emphasises their mutual necessity, he concludes, outspoken at last, that "the state of the blessed in Heaven is actually no less frightful than that of the damned in Hell" and is, moreover, less interesting. We can only continue to accept Christianity, he says, by turning it not upside down but outside in, so that fact and doctrine disappear, and the bubble of the timeless myth is all. This, whether valid and valuable or not, is certainly not very new.

Duality is of course the central theme of Mr. Taylor's book, and his thesis, stated baldly, is simple enough to make you suspicious. It is that all religious forms—and reforms—all social customs and codes of individual behaviour are governed by twin human impulses, mutually opposed. These he calls patrism and matrism, in accordance with their wishful identification with the father or mother figure in the human constellation. The orthodox Jewish religion is the patrist creed of a patriarchal race. The Greeks had father Zeus, but were very doubtful patrists: mother religion, like mother nature, kept rushing in by the window when driven out by the door.

Mr. Taylor goes so far as to tabulate the contrasted characteristics of the two types, and convincing enough they are. The patrist is prudish, restrictive of sex and woman, an authoritarian, conservative, hates research and spontaneity, is terrified of homosexuality, and deprecates all forms of pleasure. The matrist is sexually free-and-easy, gives woman equal status, is democratic, inquisitive, spontaneous, has a fascinated fear of incest, and may be a hedonist. Clearly the line is too hard-and-fast. And yet—we can look round among our grandfathers and find many a patrist. And matrists are not far to seek. All this is only a step further than Freud, but such steps are so often in the wrong direction. Is this one? Of course, it can afford a cocksure, hornrimmed perspective of history. But it does seem to explain more than it distorts. Its value can be tested both by the writer's and by the reader's private application.

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The author's view of Christianity is that at its very root it was a matrist reform of a patrist creed—hence the early love-feasts, the abeyance of rules, the prominence of women. But in the hands of Paul and his successors it was quickly remoulded in the patrist pattern. The patrist church was intolerant of the mother-religions above all others—until it had to admit and canalise their impulses in Mariolotry, which promptly grew to be the greatest of the cults. While the church had embraced Cybele (and her priesthood) it refused to tolerate the primal Christian impulse whenever it broke out in the Albigensians, or the Brethren of the Free Spirit (whose earthly paradise of promiscuous innocence is rendered in Bosch's painting). The Reformation, when it came, was a patrist reaction against a now predominantly matrist church.

Is this too easy? Not all of it is new. Yet even in crude summary it seems to touch a root of the matter. And consider the social application of the writer's theory in one example. Today, he suggests, we are moving into a matrist phase like one which began at the Restoration and dominated the 18th century. "As we have noticed is usual in matrist phases, the difference between the dress and behaviour of the two sexes is minimised. But whereas in the previous matrist phase, the dress of men imitated that of women in richness and delicacy, today it is the dress of women which approximates in simplicity to that of men." Parallel and contrast are of course carried further, to show the unpredictable antitheses which occur in phases of the same kind. The author's theory is in fact both consistent and elastic to a remarkable degree. Apply it to a period he scarcely mentions, 17th century France. Was the Fronde perhaps a matrist revolt (often led by aristocratic amazons) against the patrist imposition of Richelieu and Mazarin? Political licence was reined in, but the curious thing is that society retained its matrist pattern. Louis XIV, in fact, was not the paternal monarch he might seem, but rather the Sun-god, *le roi soleil*, in a self-enclosed matrist universe. Or apply the idea to the present. Can Communism be seen as a subtle invasion of matrist ideals, sterilised and made fast by a patrist rigor?

Impossible to resume the writer's application at any length. I hope I have shown that it is often persuasive, sometimes convincing. And he has an eye for memorable detail. I must mention two. First, the words of the chant of the manic dancers of the Middle Ages: "Oh, Lord St. John. Thus, thus, whole and happy, Lord St. John!" Communal ecstasy had been the rite of the Johannine Christians. It was rigidly repressed by the church. Which is why we find it so hard to understand today. Even the solitary ecstatics—St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa—were disapproved of. Which began, perhaps, the tradition of lonely, warped, visionary genius. The other detail is that of the incredible Victorian stratagems for the control of infantile masturbation, including a proposed device whereby "any filial erection was made to ring an electric bell in the parent's room."

The author's treatment of the Victorians is as illuminating in its way as is his diagnosis of the troubadour cult in another. Many minor faults and inconsistencies, in a work of such a range, are surely to be forgiven—more easily than the author's rather facile final conclusions, which are summed up in: "We are ruled by the dead." We'd do badly without them. The hatred of history—in Camus, Orwell—is a contemporary symptom of the intellectual's hysteria, at best no better than the thin end of Shelley's "The world is weary of the past." The world had better try to begin to understand the past. Without it the present is no more than a wilderness of intersections leading nowhere out of nowhere.

Finally, are *you* a patrist or a matrist? The author is definitely the latter. But maybe the real point is neither to plump nor to compromise, but to see the necessity of the opposites and the swing between them. What we have never learned, in politics or elsewhere, is to see the difference between the wishful fixity of our ideals and illusions, and the relentless, indifferent reality of movement which carries us past them.

David Paul

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